



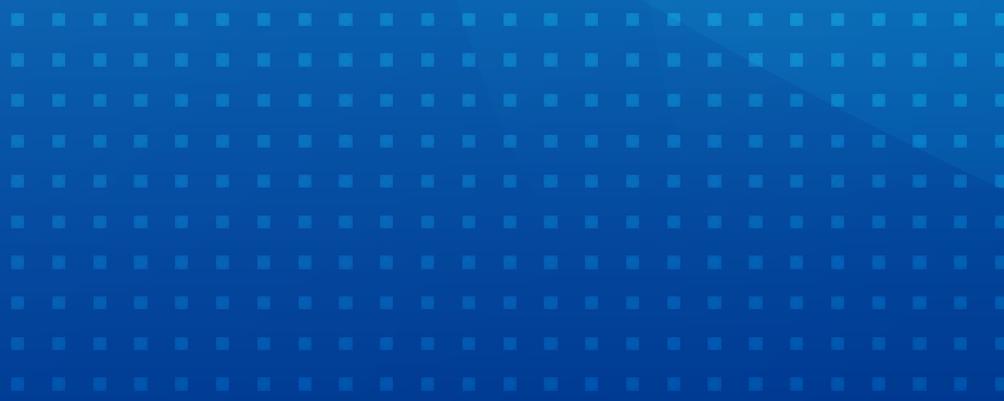
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# RESULTS OF MEDIA MONITORING FOR THE 2017 LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE ELECTIONS IN GEORGIA



**Results of Media Monitoring for the 2017  
Local Self-Government Elections in Georgia**

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## **Introduction**

Media monitoring for the 2017 Local Self-Government elections in Georgia was carried out within the frameworks of the EU-UNDP funded project Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2017 Local Government Elections in Georgia.

Media monitoring was implemented by civil society organizations:

- Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics – Monitoring of TV news and TV talk shows;
- Internews Georgia – Monitoring of radios;
- Civic Development Institute (CDI) – Monitoring of online and printed media;

Monitors observed political subjects (See Annex 1) in up to 60 media outlets.

# Monitoring of TV News



## About the Project

The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics carried out the monitoring of TV channels within the frameworks of the EU-UNDP funded project Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2017 Local Self-Government Elections in Georgia. The monitoring started on 19 June 2017 and was completed on 19 November 2017.

The following TV channels were monitored: Public Broadcaster, Rustavi 2, Imedi, TV Pirveli, Obiektivi, Ajara TV, TV 25, Rioni, Gurjaani, Guria, Kvemo Kartli, Trialeti, Odishi and Metkhre Arkhi. The monitors observed primetime news programs.

## Methodology

Pre-election media monitoring of TV news includes quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative monitoring includes the time allocated to the subjects, direct and indirect speech and the coverage tone. The qualitative monitoring components are: balance, accuracy, fact-based coverage, manipulation with telecast and music.

The coverage tone is given to the subject when somebody speaks about it indirectly and also when he/she speaks about himself/herself, other subjects or general issues. The diagram shows three types of tone: positive (green), neutral (yellow) and negative (red). When the time allocated to the subject is counted, the tone of time allocated is evaluated thereafter. Attention is paid to the text of the journalist or the respondent, as well as the whole context of the story.

Components of the qualitative analysis include balance, or how different opinions are expressed around the issue presented in the stories. Also monitors observe whether the journalist's conclusion and the materials used in the story (telecasts, respondent comments) correspond to each other.

## Key Findings:

- Georgian Dream, and Local and Central Governments were allocated most of the time, based on the data of all monitored channels.
- In the previous years Government was allocated most coverage time on majority of channels. The tendency is different in these elections. The aggregated data of six

months shows that on six out of 14 channels most time was allocated to the Georgian Dream.

- The Georgian Dream was most positively covered by the First Channel of the Public Broadcaster, with 6% of the time allocated to it. Among the regional channels Georgian Dream was most positively covered by Gurjaani with 18% of the time allocated to it.
- The Georgian Dream was covered most negatively by Rustavi 2 (45%) from the central channels and by Odishi (54%) from the regional channels.
- The majority of regional channels allocated most time to Local Government.
- The Local Government was covered most positively on TV company Gurjaani, with 13% of the time allocated to it; most negatively on Rustavi 2, with 51% of the allocated time.
- Among central TV stations, the Government was covered most positively by the First Channel, with 9% of the time allocated to it. From regional channels, Gurjaani was leading by 25% in positive coverage of the Government.
- The Government was covered most negatively by Rustavi 2 (52%) from the central channels and by Odishi (47%) from the regional channels.
- Among the parties, the Georgian Dream was allocated the most time. The National Movement and European Georgia followed it.
- National Movement had the most positive coverage on Rustavi 2 (7%) among the central channels and on Gurjaani (20%) among the regional channels. From the central channels Obiektivi (80%) covered the National Movement most negatively. As for regional channels, it was Ajara TV (11%).
- If other channels covered the central and local Governments and the two major parties (National Movement and Georgian Dream) most frequently, TV company Obiektivi was the only channel where Alliance of Patriots had most coverage, as well as the highest indicator for the positive tone (12%).
- The most critical coverage towards authorities was demonstrated on Rustavi 2. Critical reporting on the Government was most present on Rustavi 2, compared to other channels.
- Rustavi 2 expressed evident sympathy towards the National Movement and its mayorship candidate.
- First Channel of the Georgian Public Broadcaster and Imedi TV were characterized by a soft, modest reporting towards the Government. The editorial policies of these two channels have come significantly closer after elections. In some cases, they prepared similar loyal reports towards the government.
- The TV company Obiektivi is distinguished by biased reporting in favor of the Alliance of Patriots and its mayorship candidate.
- Compared to the previous year, the cases of hate speech and inappropriate language in news programs have sharply decreased.
- Obiektivi is the only channel where xenophobic content was observed.

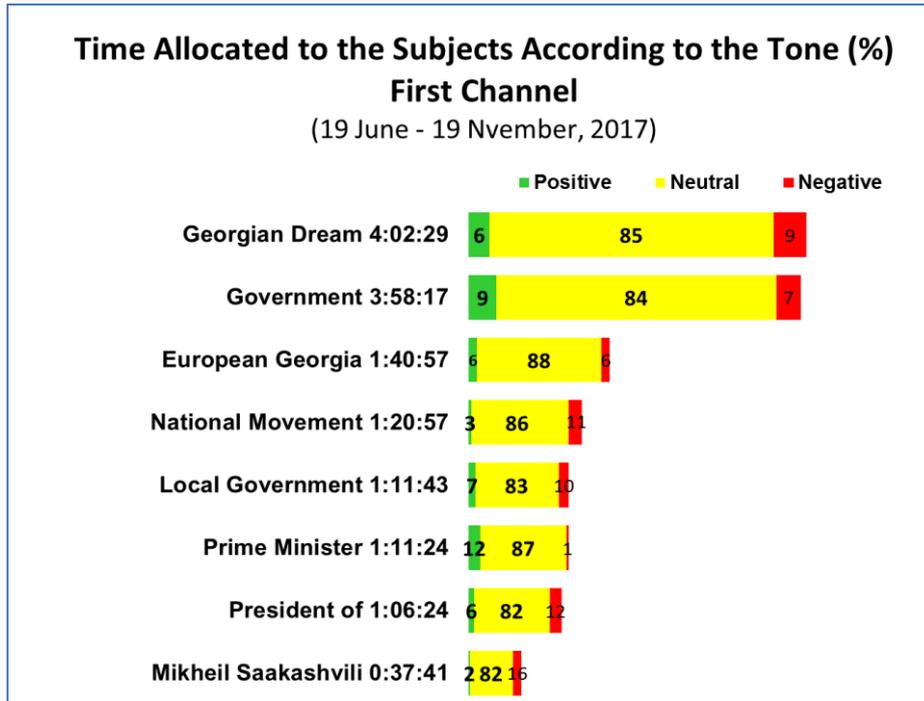
- Lack of in-depth election reporting that would help voters in making informed choice remains a challenge for almost all the channels.
- Facts of violation of a reasonable balance have reduced compared to the previous year. However, the so called short footages with sound bites were not always balanced
- The news programs were not always regularly broadcasted on regional channels. In cases, the schedule of programs was inconsistent and sometimes there was no news program for several days. This tendency continued after the first round of elections.
- Some regional channels used materials prepared by press offices of governmental agencies without clear indication of their origin.
- The advertising content was detected in news programs of several regional TV channels, which is inadmissible.
- Regional channels have technical problems, the quality of the sound and video is low, the titles for respondents are absent.

### **First Channel**

#### **Quantitative Results**

During the monitoring period monitors were observing the main newscast of the First Channel - Moambe at 8 p.m. For the whole period, the most time was allocated to the party Georgian Dream. The Prime Minister was covered most positively, 12% of the time allocated to him was positive. Mikheil Saakashvili was covered most negatively, 16% of the time allocated to him was negative.

Among the Tbilisi Mayor candidates, the most time was allocated to the Georgian Dream's candidate, Kakha Kaladze. He was positively covered in 18% of the time allocated to him, which was at least three times higher than the positive coverage of competitors. There was no significant negative reporting of the Mayor candidates in terms of quantitative analysis at the First Channel.



### Qualitative Results

The main broadcast of Moambe reflected on most important news. However, there were exceptions. Moambe ignored certain topics that attracted attention on other channels.

The program was not distinguished by critical reporting towards the Government. It cannot be called a watchdog news program. Moambe rarely prepared stories critical to Government. Little criticism towards the authorities and the ruling party was voiced on the Public Broadcaster, mostly thanks to comments from the opposition. It may happen on GPB that in one story several representatives of the Georgian Dream are present, while there is only one politician from the opposition.

Exclusive material on acute topics rarely finds its place on Moambe. The broadcaster almost never reveals corruption facts, rarely covers exclusive cases of human rights violations. Important social issues are covered in Moambe, such as labour rights, tourism development, and education. In these stories, the problems are raised but there is no sharp criticism of the specific responsible government agency.

At the end of the monitoring period, time and format of Moambe was changed. The new format envisaged shorter stories. Main topics of the day were covered by short footages with sound bites, which is incompatible with the main news release. The audience expects a thorough, versatile coverage of the important story, which is often not possible in the 30-50 seconds.

Quantitative results of the monitoring show that the authorities – Government, Prime Minister, Georgian Dream, Kakha Kaladze were covered most positively. First Channel was particularly kind to Kakha Kaladze. The elections were followed by number of stories, which showed Kaladze

positively. For example, a 6-minute report was dedicated on [November 19<sup>th</sup>](#) to the first working week of the new Mayor of Tbilisi. The journalist said that Kaladze was "everywhere where something is being done" and "Kaladze is going to solve all the problems that Tbilisi residents have." The journalist was biased in favor of the mayor of Tbilisi, for example: "Then he [Kaladze] traveled in the yellow bus and decided that the transport was to be replaced urgently." However, Kaladze himself said the replacement of the buses will not be urgent, but it will take place within 4 years of his term.

Another phrase of the journalist is noteworthy: "Predecessors of Kaladze used such PR moves during pre-election campaigns, we have rarely seen elected Mayors out of their governmental SUVs, walking in the street." This text was accompanied by the archive footage of Gigi Ugulava. Despite the fact that the journalist in the text used the word Mayors in plural, only one former Mayor was shown. It was not indicated whether the journalist also referred to former Mayor of Tbilisi Davit Narmania (from Georgian Dream) when speaking of the Mayors that cannot be seen out of their Governmental cars. This fragment of the story is an example of bias in favor of the ruling party. Another part of the journalist's text was dedicated to Kaladze's decision to invite the audit service to the City Hall for inspection: "Experts evaluate this decision as correct and competent." It was not specified which experts evaluate this decision positively, neither comment of any expert was shown.

In the long report all of Kaladze's decisions were presented positively. According to the story Kaladze knows Tbilisi's problems and how to solve them. The journalist also said: "Nationals [United National Movement] and former Nationals were demanding Kaladze to attend the meeting." This text can be regarded as an attempt to depreciate the opposition in the Local Assembly. This is not what an ethical, impartial journalist does.

The whole story was compiled of Kakha Kaladze's comments and journalist's texts. There was no critical question on how realistic are his promises. No analysis was provided on whether it is possible to fulfill these promises with the budget of Tbilisi. It was not assessed whether Kakha Kaladze's administration is able to improve ecological condition in the city. The story did not meet most basic standards of media as a watchdog and served only the new Mayor, presenting him as a savior of Tbilisi. "Media will control [you] and wish you success" - the journalist's ending phrase came at the shot of the handshake with the Mayor.

As we have already mentioned, the first channel was covering Kaladze positively before the elections as well. In contrast to Kaladze's case, the story about Aleksandre Elisashvili, another mayoral candidate was prepared on 3 October, with evident violation of ethical principles and norms. In the story the audience had a chance to get information on Elisashvili's opinions and views, but at one point the journalist said the following sentence: "He speaks everywhere about the things that he wants to accomplish, and most of all at the meetings with the potential voters; though being the experienced journalist and being already a politician he should know that the pre-election meetings have two sides of the same coin. One when other candidates are more

trusted and another, when on the contrary, they trust you more.” In the background of this text, two active men were seen in the video and according to the journalist’s text, there was an impression that they had been dissatisfied with Elisashvili, they had some complaints with him and accused him of lying. The basis for this conclusion was that the audience watched and heard noise and some fragments of the conversation of those people.

Later, Aleko Elisashvili’s election campaign head office released the 8-minute video recording where two ordinary people expressing their dissatisfaction as voters who were covered in the news of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) in reality appeared to be the government officials. One was the first deputy governor of the Didube district and the other, a member of the Georgian Dream and representative of the Didube district election head office. The video recording showed some clashes and disturbances between the Elisashvili supporters and the government supporters, giving evidence that the above-mentioned persons were not the regular voters. The same video recording proved that the journalist and the cameraman of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), who prepared the story about Elisashvili, had been observing the clashes. Normally, they should have known that the persons who were dissatisfied with Elisashvili were not the ordinary voters and were the supporters of the government. However, those facts were not observed in the story and inaccurate information was presented to the Government. This little detail completely changed the content of the story: Elisashvili was not encountered by the unsatisfied voters at the meeting (as seen from the story) but by the supporters of the government whose activities may have contained evidence of interference in the election campaign. This fact was left behind the attention of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) journalist.

Most of the topics on the First Channel were balanced and impartial, but at the critical moments Moambe demonstrated bias towards the government and violated ethical principles. For example, in the pre-election period, Ozurgeti was in sharp competition between the ruling candidate Beglar Sioridze and the independent candidate Konstantine Sharashenidze. The victory in the second round for Georgian Dream in Ozurgeti was important. This had been proved by frequent visits of the Georgian Dream members of high position. In this context, a few hours before the second round of elections a story about Sharashenidze and Sioridze [was](#) the first news item of Moambe.

The Moambe journalist said about Konstantine Sharashenidze: ”When we started the interview we got a badge microphone on him and then we left him for a few seconds with people involved in his election campaign. You can see the rest of the video now.” The journalist's introduction was followed by a conversation between an independent candidate for Mayor and a member of his staff, placed on the screen through a caption. The caption read that the staff member tells Sharashenidze ”Just lie something, say something.” Sharashenidze answers - ”All right.” These few seconds were followed by the journalist's text: ”This is sad. Lying to us means lying to his voters.” With this footage and comments of the journalist it was indicated that the only competitor of the Georgian Dream planned to lie to the GPB journalist amid instructions from his staff member. The journalist declared this as a confirmed fact.

Sharashenidze's office responded to this discussion clarifying that the member of the staff was asking the candidate to “demand” and not to “lie” as the First Channel journalist told the viewers. Few hours after the report Georgian Dream parliamentary majority leader and Ozurgeti majoritarian Archil Talakvadze, together with Governmental candidate for Ozurgeti Mayorship conducted briefing and accused Sharashenidze and his staff of attempt to spread false information, based on the report by First Channel.

In this example, there are several important ethical violations by the editorial staff of Moambe. **First:** If the presented scenario were true, the journalist should not have aired this information a few hours before the elections without a comment from Sharashenidze. Before releasing this information, the journalist should have obtained comment from the candidate by any means of communication and should have asked him to clarify what he planned to lie about. Instead, Moambe decided to air unbalanced and unverified story only few hours before elections, as the first item in their last news program before the voting. This story damaged the reputation of the independent candidate and benefitted the Government. This was an ethically unjustified decision and was not in line with one of the main obligations of a journalist – to convey accurate information to the audience and refrain from biased judgments.

**The second** important problem: The clarification made by Sahrashenidze was not aired by the First Channel also in the next days. GPB has not made any clarifications regarding this later.

One more example of loyalty towards the government was the attempt to cover the confrontation in the Tbilisi Municipality around the Panorama Tbilisi. On 29 September, on the Freedom Square, where the Panorama Tbilisi hotel would be constructed, the status of the functional zone was given to the plot of land and the recreation status was changed to the 4 700 m2 land on the Tabori mountain in favor of the Tabori Resorts. The Co-Investment Fund, which is implementing the Panorama Tbilisi project and the Tabori Resorts, is connected to the former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili and there are many public sources to prove this fact. (Ivanishvili personally confirmed the fact that Panorama Tbilisi is his project in the interview given to the Guria news)

The journalist presented the story broadcasted on 29 September in the following way: “The subject of the discussions at today’s session was to change the landscape-recreational status to two land locations. The most noisy and political statements around this topic were made instead of the substantial debates, even though the deputies have not discussed the issue of conveying the specific territories to the specific companies.”

Another quote from the story: “The opposition believes that the amendments refer to the CoInvestment Fund project and the company related to Bidzina Ivanishvili.”

With the above-mentioned phrases, the journalist showed that only the opposition associated those facts with Bidzina Ivanishvili. That storyline accompanied the entire story. Even the Georgian Dream did not deny the fact that the decision of the Municipality was directly

connected with Ivanishvili. There was no information in the report that the Ivanishvili-related company requested the transfer of the land in Pushkin Square for 1 Gel. The story did not cover (only for a few seconds in the promo) any information regarding the fact that Elene Khoshtaria, Member of the Parliament of Georgia and the Tbilisi mayoral candidate, as well as the head of the civic group Partisan Gardeners were forcibly escorted from the Municipality hall by the police.

Upon the end of the story, the author of the news material was involved in the broadcast and told the audience about the planned works. The reporter noted that the area on the Tabori Mountain would be used for arranging and construction of the irrigation system, while the area in the Pushkin Square was intended for a parking space; the summary of the story was that the opposition was against the construction of the irrigation system and arrangement of the parking space. Furthermore, that story was followed by the issue of solving the parking space problem in Tbilisi, when Moambe news anchor presented the position of the Municipality regarding the change of the status to the land in the Freedom Square in a positive context: “The project that is now the cause of the protests, is solving one of the main challenges in Tbilisi – the problem of parking space.”

This text of the anchor was subjective and was not based on the facts. The company related to Ivanishvili planned to arrange a parking space in the Pushkini Square for 30-120 cars (a part of which would serve the hotel related to Ivanishvili). This is a drop in the sea for Tbilisi, which faces severe parking space problem. It is unacceptable when the journalist and the anchor subjectively wrap the problematic issue and present it to the society in such form. It would be better for the journalist to find more information, to research and make analysis of the story and not just to create it relaying only on the political accusations of the opposition and the government and the personal assessments.

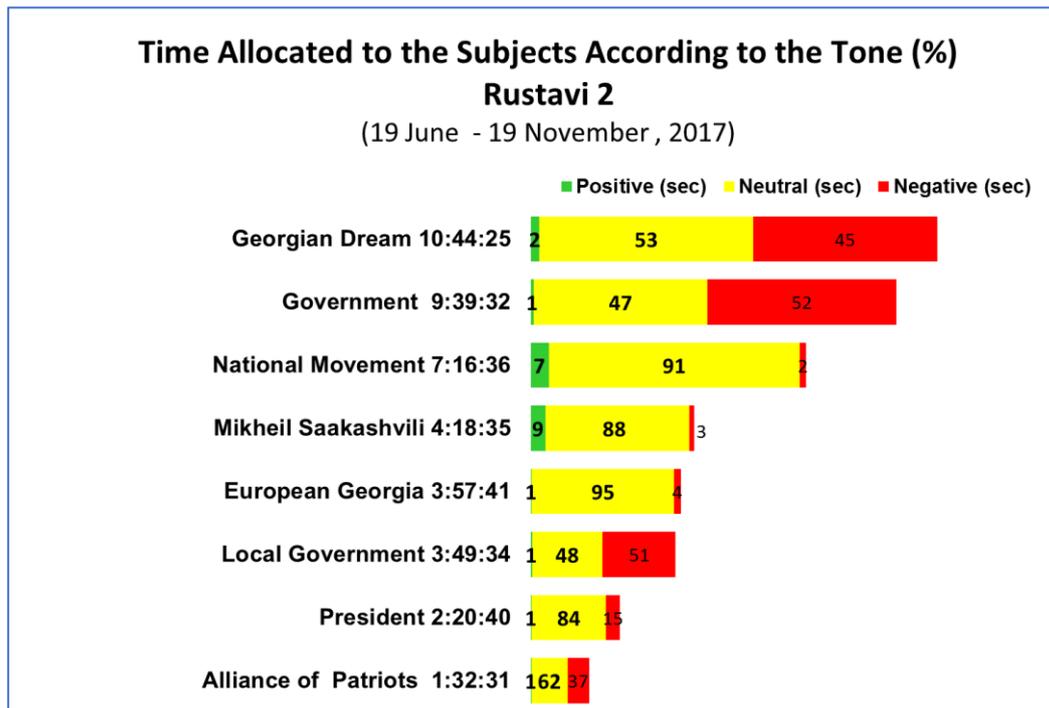
It should also be noted that the main newscast of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) did not cover the information that the Ajara Municipality had also decided on the same day (29 September), to benefit the Ivanishvili company. According to the Ajara Public Broadcaster, the Municipality and the Ajara government had been implementing procedures aimed at handling the property rights to the company of Ivanishvili on ownership of the land with the botanical garden and the beach for 49 years period on the Mtsvane Kontskhi.

It is important that the procedures for these issues are forcefully and simultaneously carried out in favor of Ivanishvili by the Municipalities both in Batumi and in Tbilisi and this happened only several weeks before the upcoming elections and the end of their terms. Moambe news program did not pay any attention to those factors.

## Rustavi 2

### Quantitative Results

The monitors were observing Kurieri at 9 p.m, Shabatis Kurieri and P.S. Georgian Dream was covered most frequently on this channel and Mikheil Saakashvili most positively, with 9% of the time allocated to him to be positive. The most negative coverage was demonstrated towards the Georgian Government, with 52% of the allocated time. Rustavi 2 positively covered Tbilisi mayorship candidate Zaal Udumashvili, with 8% of the time allocated to him. Kakha Kaladze was covered most negatively (29%).



### Qualitative Results

Rustavi 2 Is distinguished among monitoring channels by frequent criticism of the Government. There were frequent exclusives in its news programs, where the cases of corruption and human rights violations were discussed.

Among the political parties the United National Movement was covered most frequently. Comments by UNM leaders were used most often in assessment of various issues. The intensity of coverage of the UNM Tbilisi Mayorship candidate Zaal Udumashvili sharply decreased after the elections. Coverage of Mikheil Saakashvili's political activities in Ukraine were regular and positive.

Balance was mainly a problem in reports covering the Government. For example, on November 14th, a story titled "Kvirikashvili's business interests" was aired on Kurieri. The host presented the

story with the following text: "Prime Minister's business interests and millions of GEL from the state; Giorgi Kvirikashvili has transferred his shares to business partners, but, as it turns out, the transfer was fictional. In reality he owns more than 60 companies with Rafael Suramelashvili and Davit Nozadze and they have participated in more than 193 state tenders."

This text was based only on the story of the editor of the newspaper Qronika Plus. During the whole story, serious allegations were voiced against the Prime Minister. They were based on the single source again – newspaper Qronika Plus: "the Prime Minister Stands behind these companies"; "Friends of Prime Minister still pay him shares from his companies;" "He manages affairs in the Customs Clearance Office on behalf of the Prime Minister;" "He is the "Cashier" of Prime Minister Kvirikashvili.". In a 6-minute report there was no response from Prime Minister Kvirikashvili and no attempt to obtain any comment from him was apparent. The journalist could have easily contacted the press office of the Government Administration, send them questions and reflect their answers in the story.

Quantitative as well as qualitative monitoring has shown that Rustavi 2 was especially sympathetic to the National Movement and its Mayorship candidate in Tbilisi Zaal Udumashvili during the pre-election period. The intensity and positive tone of coverage of this candidate was not within principles of impartial, balanced and ethical journalism.

The first problem was to present Udumashvili as a mayoral candidate from the Kurieri news studio. A few minutes before the end of the program on 19 June, Zaal Udumashvili, one of the anchors of the newscast, said farewell to the audience and declared that he would be a Tbilisi mayoral candidate for 2017 elections.

"Now I think that the time has come when I have to become an active participant in the political process and make my contribution to the struggle which will end in the total disarray and one man's rule in the country. I really have the experience of struggle, I've spent very interesting years as a journalist, and at the same time, I've gained a huge experience of how to combat injustice. Together with Rustavi 2 team and you I have already won a completely unequal struggle with this government. However, the country has a major battle ahead and I am going together with you and under your name to join into this battle and win once again and this time to defeat [Bidzina] Ivanishvilis corrupt and anti-democratic regime in the Tbilisi mayoral elections" - said Udumashvili.

Apart from Udumashvili, his co-anchor, Diana Jojua also voiced political statements from the Kurieri news studio. She made the positive references in the address of her colleague and invited the audience to support Zaal Udumashvili. The above-mentioned example is contradictory to the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, namely: according to the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters a broadcaster is obliged to observe the principle of impartiality while reporting news (Article 15) and no position of any political party, public, religious community or other interest group shall be allowed to be expressed (Article 16). In addition, employees who represent a broadcaster shall not publicly support any political candidate or a political party (Article 29).

The praising of Udumashvili continued in Kurieri the next day and the following days: “He has been outstanding at all stages in the TV space. He has an unusual charisma. At every stage, he has played a very important role in Georgian journalism, we were together in war and in the happy times, he is a brave person [Zaal Udumashvili]” - said Diana Jojua, who anchored newscast where the story was covered.

Live, she wished him all the successes after the end of the story. The praising of Udumashvili continued in other circumstances as well: “Until now, Zaliko Udumashvili has been greeting the audience from the screen. Tbilisi is his home and the love of this home has taken him from the TV box into the streets of the city” - said the journalist about his former colleague and presently, a Tbilisi mayoral candidate; and after that, Udumashvili appeared again addressing the people and playing with children.

“It seems not so difficult to go into politics from journalism. He knows all about the key and principal issues of Tbilisi. He has the experience of a manager and the necessary qualities to head the city.”

The similar praising words were repeatedly addressed to Udumashvili in those and other covered stories, and as it was already mentioned above, they were far from the impartial journalism.

The negative attitude towards Bidzina Ivanishvili was clearly observed in Rustavi 2 air. Several items were dedicated to Ivanishvili’s Bank Cartu (19-24 September). The rallies of the National Movement in front of the bank were covered; the serious allegations (money laundering, financial fraud, robbery, misappropriation of public funds etc.) were heard at the rallies, however, no proves were provided. Consequently, it was revealed that the serious allegations rely on one source only, National Movement.

## **Imedi**

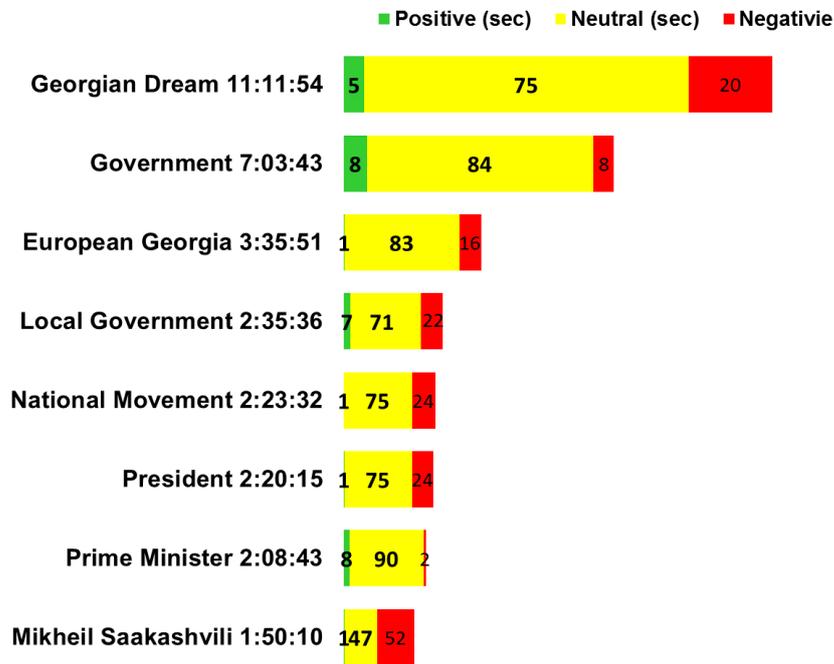
### **Quantitative Results**

In Imedi TV broadcasting monitors observed main news releases, Kronika at 8 p.m. and Imedis Kvira. Most of the time on the channel was dedicated to the Georgian Dream. The Government was covered most positively, with 8% of the time allocated. Mikheil Saakashvili was covered most negatively, with 52% of the time allocated. The most positive coverage among the Mayorship candidates was given to Kakha Kaladze (9%).

## Time Allocated to the Subjects According to the Tone (%)

Imedi

19 June - 19 November, 2017



### Qualitative Results

During the monitoring period, Imedi almost never criticized the ruling party. It was less sympathetic towards the current President. Distinguished negative coverage was towards Mikheil Saakashvili and the National Movement. After the elections a number of positive reports were devoted to Kakha Kaladze and new members of the government. In this regard, Imedis Kvira was particularly distinguished.

On November 19<sup>th</sup>, in Imedis Kvira there was a story on the new Minister of Finance Mamuka Bakhtadze. The 12-minute material was devoted entirely to Bakhtadze's positive portrayal. According to the story, Mamuka Bakhtadze had revived the Georgian Railway and was its most successful manager. His school-time teacher of Georgian language, his former coach of Rugby and his Singaporean friend were all speaking of his virtues. All of them presented the new Minister as a positive person. The following phrases were mentioned: "He loved chatting with elderly people;", "he was a promising sportsman"; "his dreams were always related to Georgia"; "It was shocking for us that he refused a very good proposal to work in one of Singapore's leading companies and returned to Georgia." No different position was voiced during this long report. It was impossible to understand whether Bakhtadze was really so much successful in the Railway. The report was based on the interview with Bakhtadze and biased commentaries of the journalist. This is beyond impartial and balanced journalism. Such reports are simply pro-Governmental.

Also on [November 19<sup>th</sup>](#), in Imedis Kvira there was a story devoted to Kakha Kaladze's first working week. On the same day, the similar story about Kakha Kaladze's first working week had been broadcasted on the First channel (that we had already described above).

Journalist's text was the following: “The captain of the City Government is going to play a new game, and plans to change the city to give it a chance of consistent and right development; “Competence, motivation and honesty -he [Kaladze] was guided by the same principles when selecting heads of municipal services.”

In the report, the journalist presented the heads of municipal services in positive terms. The presentation of the head of Ecology and Greening Services was particularly pleasing. The new head of the service said that according to their plans, Tbilisi would have the same ecological conditions as in the leading European cities. The journalist did not ask any follow-up questions about how the new Mayor and his team intended to improve the heavy ecological conditions of Tbilisi in such a short time.

Similar to the First Channel report, there was a list of the streets where the new Mayor inspected the ongoing rehabilitation works in the first week. There were shots taken from the drone showing how Kaladze inspects rehabilitation works. As in the report of the First Channel, here was also the footage of Kaladze visiting an underground passage near Heroe's Square. For the second time, the journalist referred to Mayor as the captain of the government. Like the First Channel, information about inviting audit by Kaladze in City Hall was also announced here. The 10-minute report was fully dedicated to presenting Kaladze positively.

Kaladze was shown positively in a number of reports before he had been elected as Mayor. On 22 September Imedi covered the rally - One Day without Cars and the journalist said that the politicians also joined the opening of the bicycle lane in the renovated Pekini Avenue; though only the Georgian Dream mayoral candidate, Kakha Kaladze offered his comments to the audience. Kaladze was positively presented in the story. It was unclear whether Kaladze was the only politician from all the politicians who participated in the rally and that's why only he was covered in the story, or other politicians were there and Imedi news program covered only Kaladze.

The concrete cases were observed when anchors and journalists from Imedi TV repeatedly violated the ethical norms against the President and the ex-President. Kronika aired the story on 2 August, covering the information on the law vetoed by the President. The texts of the anchor and the journalist created the negative context to the decision of the President to veto the law and the decision to deprive the self-governing status to several cities was almost assigned to the President.

*“Margvelashvili signed the laws that he vetoed. These laws would have been enforced even without Margvelashvili's signature. The Speaker of the Parliament, in any case, will sign the vetoed draft of the law, and it will come into force, though it has not happened. The war with*

*veto is over and Margvelashvili declared the capitulation with his signature. The status of 7 from the 12 self-governing cities will be suspended with the consent of the President* - said the anchor covering the story.

This single storyline was presented through the entire story that the President changed his position, the veto war was over, the capitulation was signed. It is noteworthy that neither the comments of the President nor the comments of any of his representatives were heard in the released material.

Like the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), Imedi TV covered the confrontation of 29 September in the Tbilisi Municipality around the Panorama Tbilisi project. The story was released in a way as if the opposition was indiscriminately fighting and opposing the noble aim of the government that serves unloading the city from the traffic jams. In addition, the journalist said about the Co-Investment Fund that it is related to Bidzina Ivanishvili according to the opposition claims. However, Ivanishvili did not deny his relation to the fund and the Prime Minister Kvirikashvili said in his address that Ivanishvili was building a car parking in the Pushkin Square without the business interest. It is noteworthy that the style of Imedi and GPB regarding the story about the Panorama Tbilisi was the same, the identical main messages, the form of relating that project to Ivanishvili, etc. The journalists were only confronted with the accusations of the opposition and were limited to respond to those accusations, not researching further information, not studying the issue, which was absolutely damaging to the audience who had difficulties of finding out the truth: who was lying, whether the Municipality's decision was good or bad, would it bring any benefits to the society or bring the damage, etc.

As it was already mentioned, Imedi TV was observed with the criticism towards the National Movement and Mikheil Saakashvili. This was frequently demonstrated in the biased phrases of the journalists. Udumashvili, for example, was presented in the following way: "Zaal Udumashvili, a very angry candidate of the angry Tbilisi residents was the first one to show up in the session hall." And the following phrases were used in the address of Saakashvili: 'Five-star hotel resident,' "Jogging showman," "ex-President with an undefined address," etc.

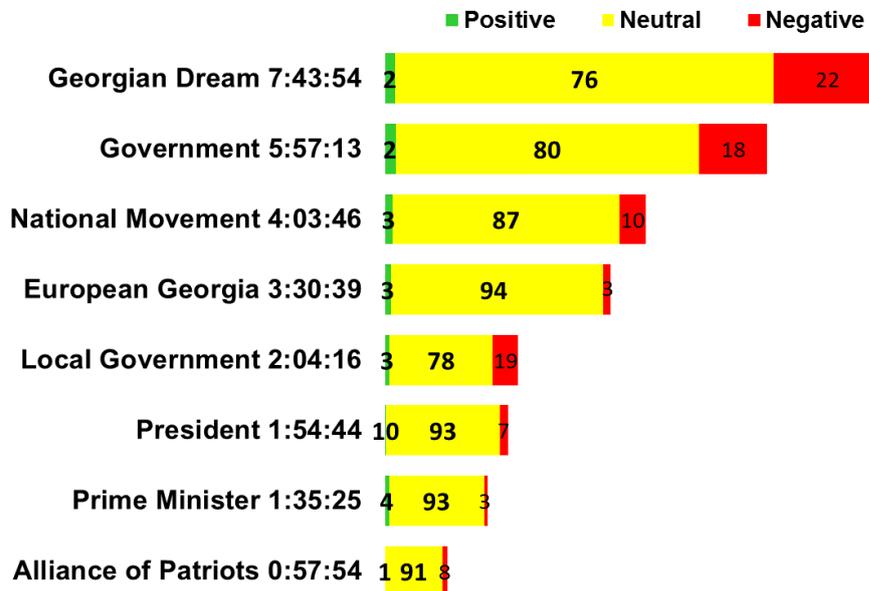
## TV Pirveli

### Quantitative Results

Monitors were observing the main informational program Dghis Ambebi. Georgian Dream was allocated most time on this channel, but 22% of the time allocated to it was negative. 3-3% of positive coverage was given to Local Authorities, National Movement and European Georgia. Among the Mayorship candidates Kakha Kaladze appeared most positively (13%).

## Time Allocated to the Subjects According to the Tone (%)

19 June - 19 November, 2017



### Qualitative results

TV Pirveli covered almost every important story in the main news program but did not have its own in-depth topics. The channel covers the stories only with short footages with sound bites. In addition, it is apparent that the channel is incapable of raising its own stories.

It does not demonstrate positive or negative attitudes towards any political force. The channel does not refrain from critical material towards the authorities. However, during the monitoring period, the [story](#) on the former Mayor of Tbilisi, Davit Narmania, was biased in favor of him. In a 5-minute report, there were only texts and interviews praising him. Projects that spoke positively of Narmania were reflected. There was nothing about the problems that have arguably become more acute during Narmania's time in the office. This includes parking in the city, public transportation, underground passages, and public toilets, unfinished infrastructural projects (e.g. Zahesi bridge), etc. None of the above mentioned issues were discussed in the report. The only thing that was reported in the story was that the book about Honorable people from Tbilisi was published with errors. However, this lightweight problem creates an impression that there was only this kind of minor problems during Narmania's period of Mayroship.

Single-sided coverage of politicians' briefings can be considered as the main problem of TV Pirveli. When covering a briefing or a statement of a party, where the allegations are heard, the journalists do not attempt to research the allegations, verify the facts and allow other parties to respond. Only a statement of a single politician satisfies journalists. In this tendency, no bias

towards any particular political party is demonstrated, the approach is the same towards everyone.

An example of single-sided coverage of the allegations is the [material](#) from November 15, about the appointment of Nugzar (Nikoloz) Chonkadze on the position of Tbilisi City Hall Municipal Security Service. As it turns out, Chonkadze was registered in the social network as Suliko Kedelashvili and was characterized by hate speech.

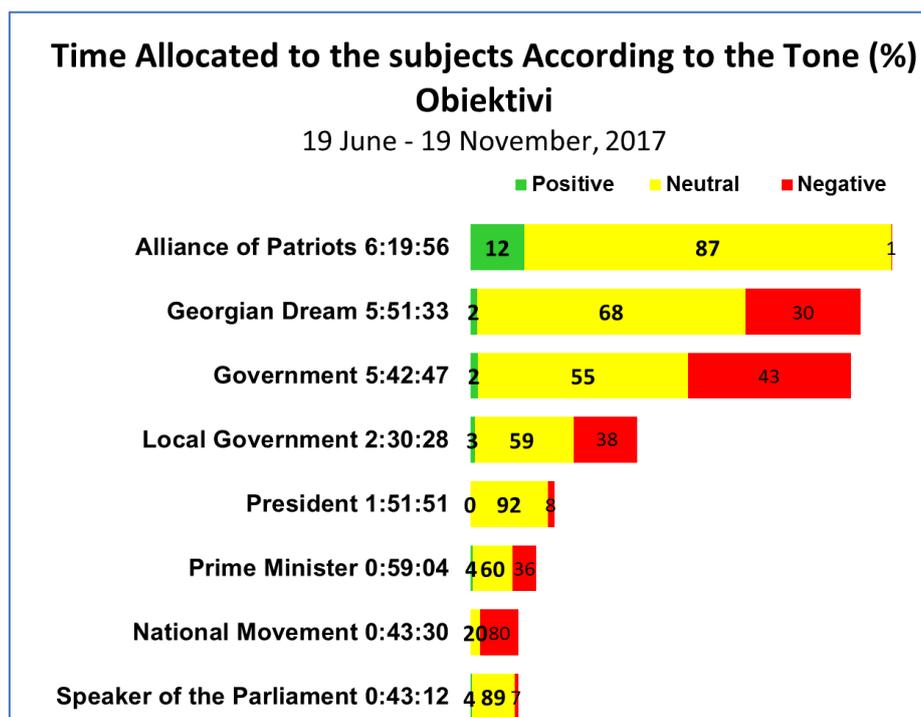
The accusations were made in the material, but neither Chonkadze nor the Tbilisi City Hall commented and no attempt was demonstrated to obtain a comment.

During the monitoring period, several similar examples were identified. Such examples are incompatible with the principles of ethical journalism. The short footages with sound bites are the same journalistic product as any other story, so the broadcaster should be able to answer the accusation.

## Obiektivi

### Quantitative Results

The main newscast of Obiektivi - Ambebi, was monitored during the reporting period. Most of the coverage time was given to the party Alliance of Patriots. 12% of its coverage was positive. The National Movement was covered most negatively (80% of its coverage was negative). Mayorship candidate from the Alliance of Patriots Irma Inashvili had highest positive coverage (23%) among Tbilisi mayorship candidates. Time allocated to her exceeded the coverage of other Tbilisi mayorship four times.



## Qualitative Results

Obiektivi's editorial policy differs from all other channels. Bias in favor of the Alliance of Patriots is obvious. This is probably because one of the leaders of the Alliance of Patriots is the founder of the Obiektivi. Throughout the monitoring period the Alliance of Patriots was declared the main opposition party on Obiektivi. Interviews with the party members were offered on all major events. The news program often followed the agenda of the party. The channel would often run unbalanced stories and deviate from the ethical principles again and again to the benefit of the Alliance of Patriots.

This tendency was particularly visible in the second round of the local self-government elections that took place on November 12, 2017. In the second round in Borjomi, the candidate from the Alliance of Patriots as the main competitor of the candidate from the Georgian Dream. In the days before the voting, Obiektivi news program ran stories on social problems of Borjomi and its adjoining districts, criticizing the government. It also reported on the pressure on members of the Alliance of Patriots. After the second round of the elections in which the candidate from the Alliance of Patriots was defeated, Obiektivi never followed up on the problems of Borjomi residents.

Obiektivi attributed a lot of time to socially vulnerable people, specifically to the issue of citizens losing social allowance. But, as a rule, such reports were limited to the mere description of poverty and never provided thorough analysis of its causes. There is also a significant tendency of negative coverage towards Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, which is also demonstrated in quantitative results.

Cases of violation of balance in the stories, superficial reporting and manipulation with texts, footage and music were frequent on Obiektivi. In addition, in the stories about the poor families, children were used as an illustration of poverty, which cannot be considered to be in a child's best interest, according to the recommendations of the Charter of Journalistic Ethics and UNICEF.

During the monitoring period the following topics were among those covered frequently: the hunger strike of the members of the Alliance of Patriots in front of the parliament building, the activities of the far-right Georgian March, the visit of members of the Alliance to Moscow. The latter was announced as a diplomatic breakthrough by Obiektivi. For example, the Moscow visit was the topic for the first news item on [October 5](#). Only opinions of party members were heard in the report. Furthermore, the members of the Alliance of Patriots were met with protesters at the airport. Even though the protesters could be seen in the report, the demonstration was not mentioned by the journalist.

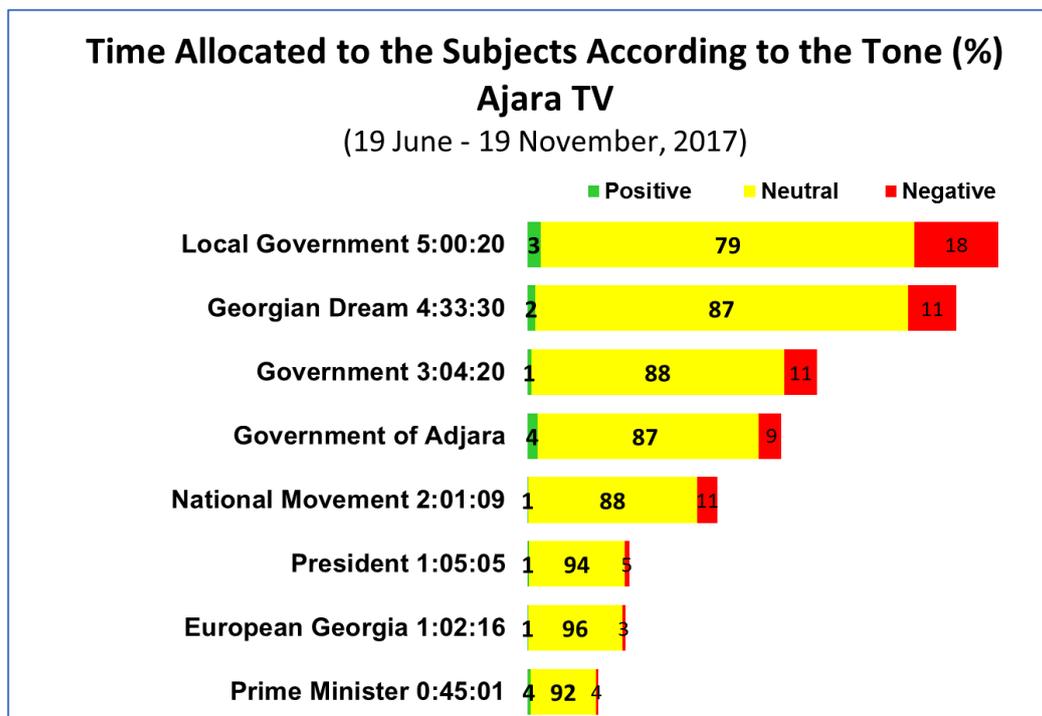
During the monitoring period, Obiektivi was the only channel where xenophobic content was aired. According to the material [of July 10](#), the Turkish restaurants replaced Georgian ones on Marjanishvili Street and Aghmashenebeli Avenue. Comments of the citizens were Turkophobic. Terms such as Tatars and Arabs were used in depreciating context. Citizens mentioned that

Georgian language is not spoken any more in this area and Georgian food is also gone. It looked as if this problem was raised artificially and opinions of only one group of people was voiced. The information conveyed through this report was not verified and accurate.

### Ajara Public Broadcaster

#### Quantitative Results

Ajara TV's prime time news program Mtavari allocated most time to the local government. Government of Ajara and Prime Minister got highest positive tone indicators, 4% each. The Local Government was covered most negatively (18%).



#### Qualitative Results

Ajara TV is distinguished among the monitoring channels in terms of diversity of topics, focusing on social issues and in-depth reporting of local problems. The majority of stories broadcasted by the channel were balanced, including critical materials about local government and Ajara government. There was no biased attitude towards any political force.

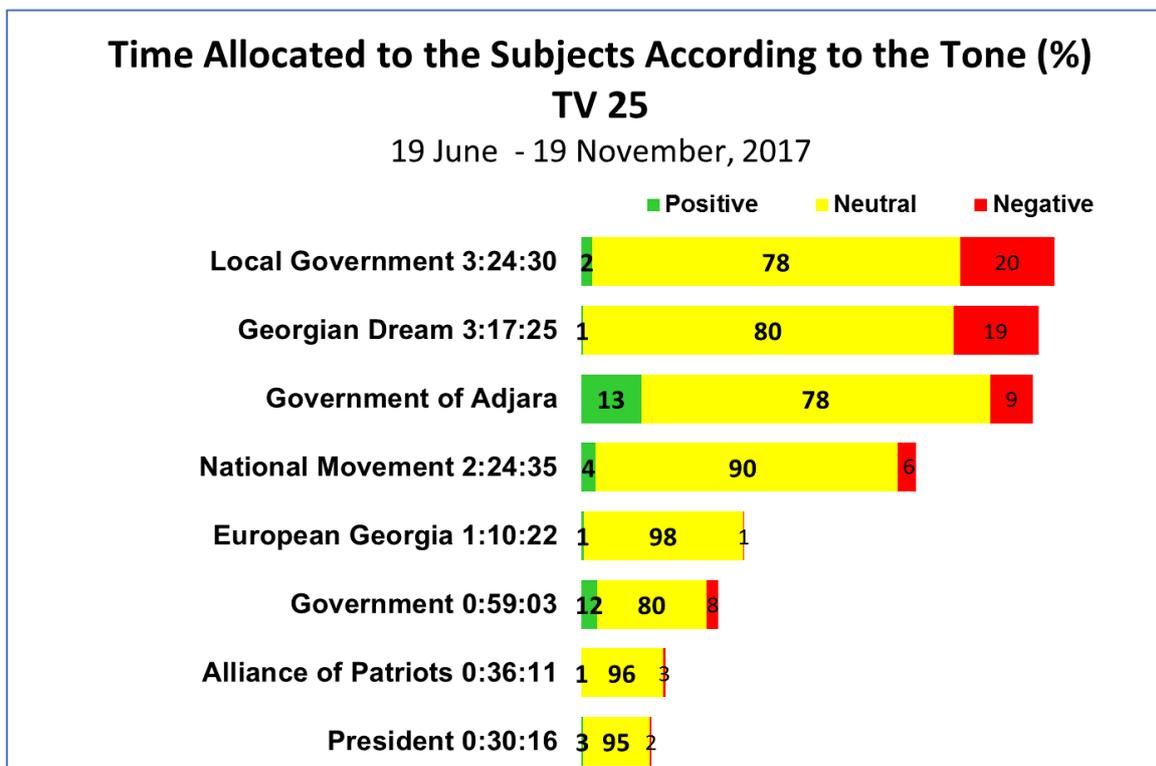
The major challenge for Adjata TV is preparation of in-depth reports with high quality. Sometimes reports were prepared on important problems in the region. However, it would appear that the journalist had not conducted thorough research. The story would not have relevant

respondents. As a result, comprehensive information was not provided to the public. For example, on November 14, [the report](#) was about problems related to grape harvesting. The journalist presented the story with the following text: “The farmers are talking about the interference from the state in selling grapes. They say that they are forced to sell the grapes to the Keda wine factory because they are not allowed to sell to private individuals. They do not like the price offered by Keda winery, where the value of grapes has not yet been established.” Based on the comment from a local resident, the Government was accused of imposing restrictions on free market. This is a serious accusation. The journalists should have researched the relevant facts. They should have looked for appropriate sources and provide the audience with comment from several respondents. Unfortunately, this did not happen. In the report, no representative of the Government made any comments and no attempt to obtain a comment was demonstrated.

## TV 25

### Quantitative Results

Most of the time on TV 25 main news program Matsne was dedicated to the Local Government. The Government of Ajara was covered most favorably; 13% of the time allocated to it was in a positive tone. The Local Government had the most negative coverage of 20% of the time allocated to it.



## Qualitative Results

The topics covered by TV 25 news program are mostly similar to topics covered by Ajara TV. For example, both channels dedicated significant time to coverage of Tianeti and Ozurgeti mayorship candidates. Both channels devoted extensive reports to the distribution of mandates in Local Assemblies.

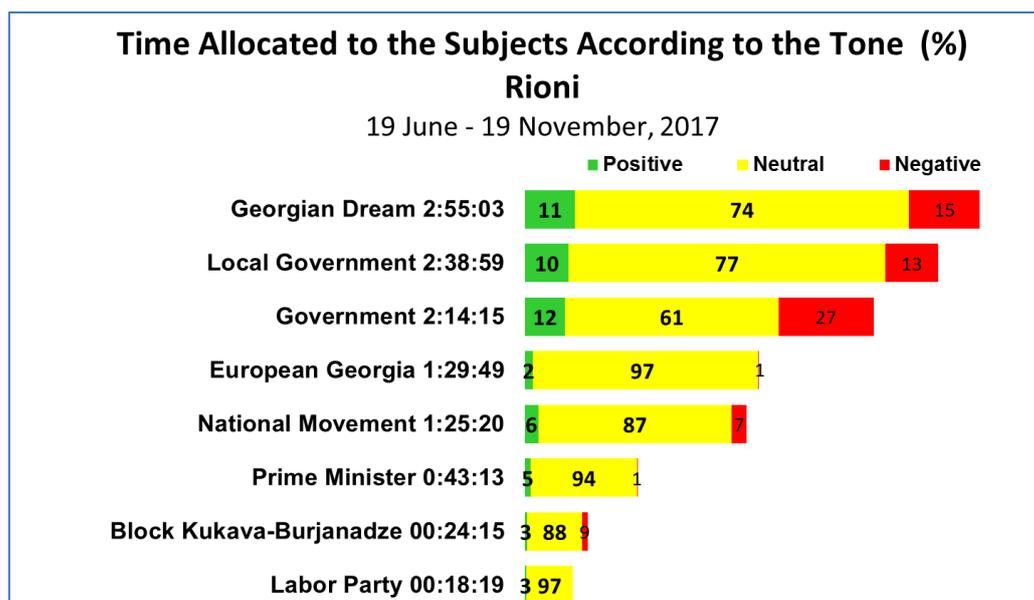
TV-25 covered range of topics relevant to the region. The news focused on the local problems. Infrastructural problems in different municipalities were covered frequently, but there were less exclusive, in-depth materials and reports were mostly superficial.

The news items in Matsne were balanced, although there were few exceptions. The channel was critical to Georgian Dream and the Local Government and the balance was against them several times. For example, on September 4, a report about the members of the Election Commission was aired. Some respondents accused Georgian Dream of preparing for election fraud. In a 5-minute report regarding these allegations, no comment from the party was offered.

## Rioni

### Quantitative results

The news program Dghis Ambebi on TV channel Rioni allocated most time to the Georgian Dream. Central Government had the highest indicator for positive coverage (12%). The government had the highest indicator for the negative coverage - 27% of the time allocated.



## Qualitative Results

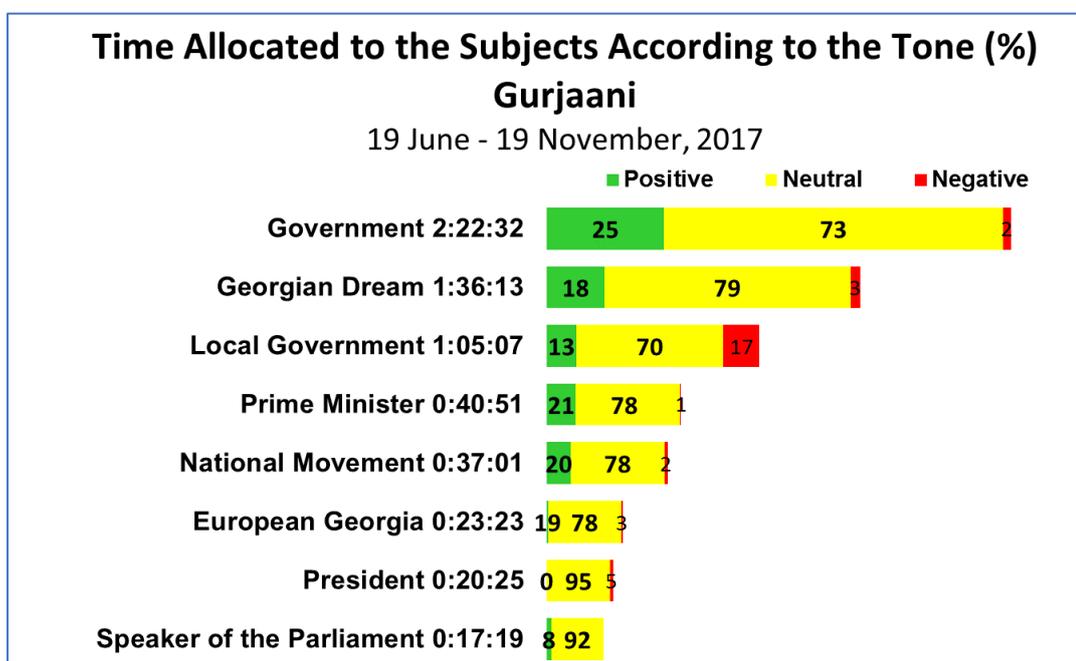
The reports broadcasted by Rioni lack depth. To observe that the reporting is balanced, two sides are presented, but the essence of the problem remains unclear because the report is incomprehensive. In many cases the journalist is not interested or capable of researching the issue thoroughly and the politicians are given the floor for demagoguery.

After the first round of elections ended, almost all the stories prepared by the channel were about Georgian Dream. The stories were often unbalanced and different opinions were not heard. Only representative of Georgian Dream commented on the majority of issues. For example, on November 8, there was an extensive report, presenting the mayorship candidate of Georgian Dream positively. Only the mayorship candidate spoke in the whole story. In November Rioni aired several more reports, where the speakers were mainly Georgian Dream leaders and they were presented positively.

## Gurjaani

### Quantitative Results

The monitors observed the newscast Dghes on Gurjaani TV. Most of the time was devoted to the Central Government, which was covered most positively as well (25%). The Local Government was covered most negatively, with 17% of its time negative.



### Qualitative Results

Gurjaani TV news program Dghes more or less covered the current affairs in the region. Reports often lacked facts, statistical data and experts' assessments. Problems and events were not

discussed in depth. The reports were often longer than 3-4 minutes, which is too lengthy. The news program had the section labeled News Outside the Region. The materials presented in this section were frequently reports by various Ministries put on their official websites in the news sections (as video footages or texts). The host almost never indicated that the broadcasted material belonged to a Ministry. Even though video footages appeared with the official labels ([www.mod.gov.ge](http://www.mod.gov.ge) or [www.police.ge](http://www.police.ge)) some viewers might have had the impression that they watched editorial material. It is therefore important that a channel indicates the source of the material clearly. Necessity of use of such material regularly is a separate issue.

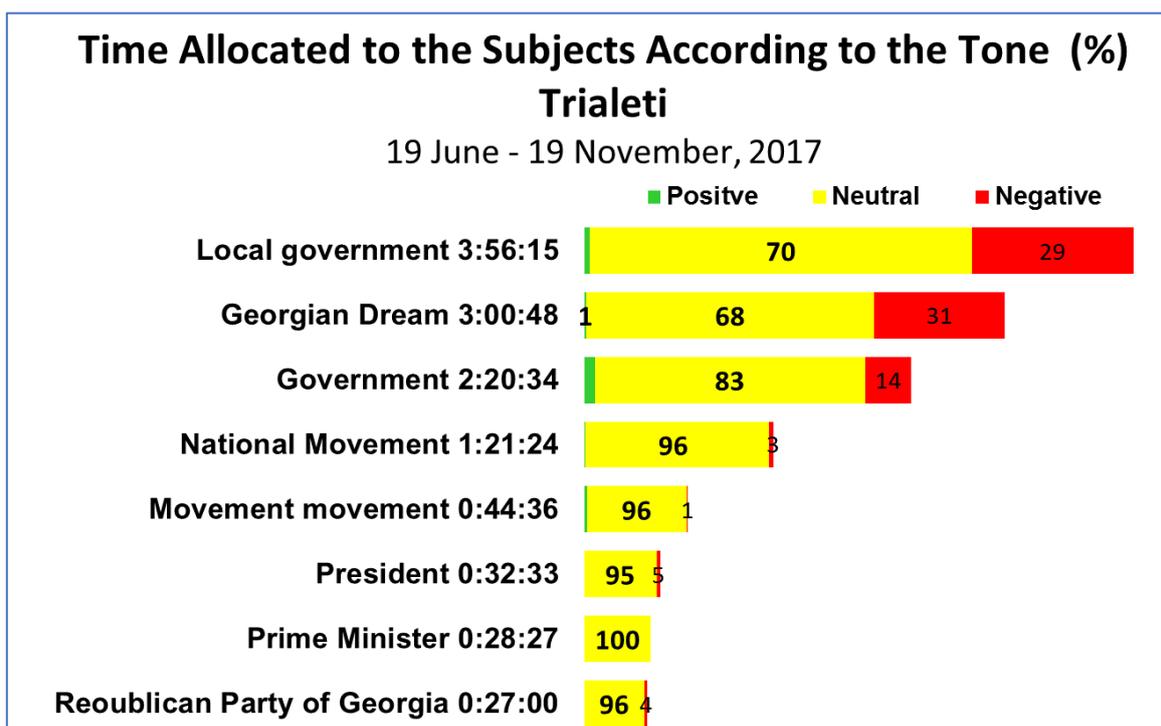
During the monitoring period, several cases of unbalanced reporting were observed. For example, in a story from [November 11](#), the Governor of Gurjaani talked about his successful 3-year term in the office. Another opinion was not provided. What do citizens, opposition and non-governmental sector say about the Governor?

On 27 October, a member of the National Movement accused the Central Election Commission of conspiring with the Georgian Dream to manipulating elections by registering citizens who live abroad as the voters. The position of the Georgian Dream or the CEC was not provided. Neither attempt to obtain a comment from them was shown.

### Trialeti

#### Quantitative Results

The Local Government was allocated most time on Trialeti's news program. Central Government was leading with the highest positive tone (3%). The Georgian Dream had the most negative coverage (31%).



## **Qualitative Results**

Trialeti was distinguished by a lot of critical stories towards the authorities, but the stories often lacked evidence (documents, statistical data and so on).

The channel tried to criticize the authorities, but criticism was often based on unverified assessments of journalists rather than facts. For example, the journalist said the following phrase: What will change after the second round of elections? There are no doubts that when the country is in poverty, the lives of residents of a small town will also not change for the better.

As indicated in the quantitative results the channel is critical to the Local Government. The balance is subsequently against the Government and Georgian Dream.

In the report prepared on [November 2](#), the journalist said the following text: “This is the incumbent mayor of Gori, Zurab Jirkvelishvili, who was elected in 2014 by the majority of the population. Part of the population does not even know about the existence of Jirkvelishvili. The government did not nominate him again. Maybe the reason for this was that he had worked ineffectively for three years.

We obviously contacted Jirkvelishvili. We were interested in his assessment of the three-year work and wanted him to recall the biggest projects, but he refused to comment. Perhaps the reason is clear for everyone - he does not have anything to say.” This story is not balance. The journalist presents her version of why the Mayor was not nominated again by the party and does not provide a comment from the party.

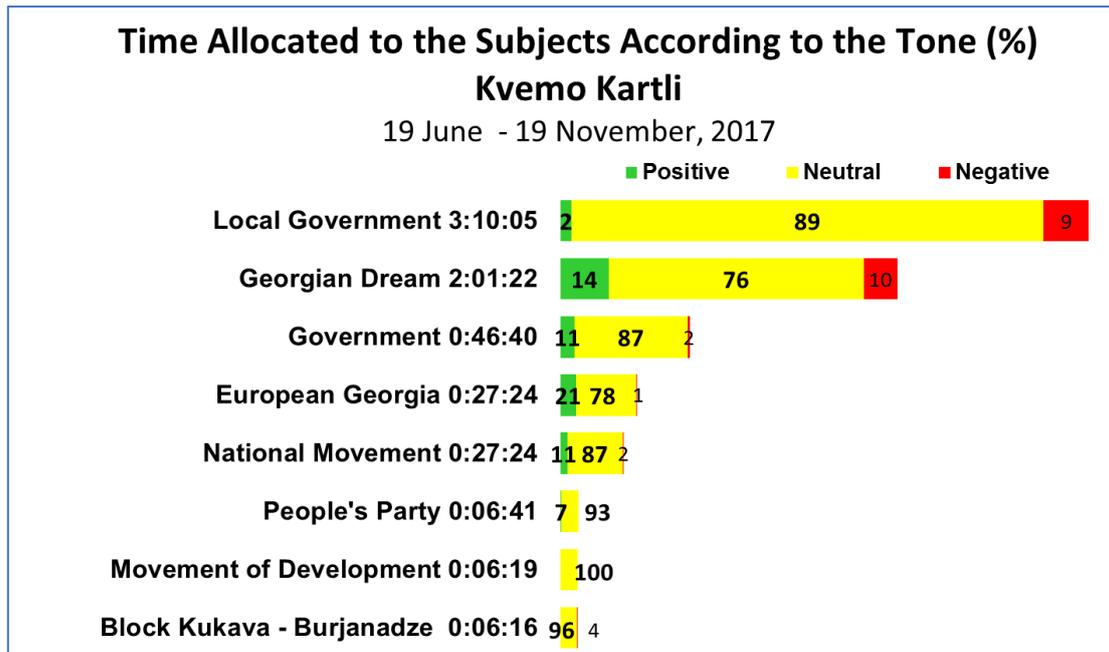
The Channel often had technical problems. This was demonstrated by absence of titles for the respondents, sudden interruptions, occasional absence of the host, showing press conference without any leading text. In addition, there were cases when the same reports were repeated.

The channel's audience often heard about the crimes revealed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Investigative Service of the Ministry of Finance. The texts of the journalist almost or fully coincided with the statements made by the Agencies. The same was the case with the Ministry of Defense. It is important that media creates its own content and does not offer its audience materials prepared by Governmental press offices. Such materials can be used as one source of information, which should develop into a full story interesting to the public.

## **Kvemo Kartli**

### **Quantitative Results**

In Kvemo Kartli TV main news program Kronika most of the time was devoted to the Local Government. The Georgian Dream was covered most positively; 14% of the time allocated to it was positive. The Georgian Dream had the biggest indicator of negative coverage as well, 10% of the time allocated.



### Qualitative Results

The Kvemo Kartli news program mainly covers the local communities, less concerned about the central news. However, coverage of issues is superficial. There is no attempt to demonstrate the depth of the topics and the diversity of opinions.

After Georgian Dream candidate Irakli Tabaghua was elected as Rustavi Mayor, the absolute majority of stories about him covered him positively. He is seen attending a concert for example, or an event of even more minor importance. After, he shares his opinions.

The reports are mostly balanced, but there are several cases of imbalance.

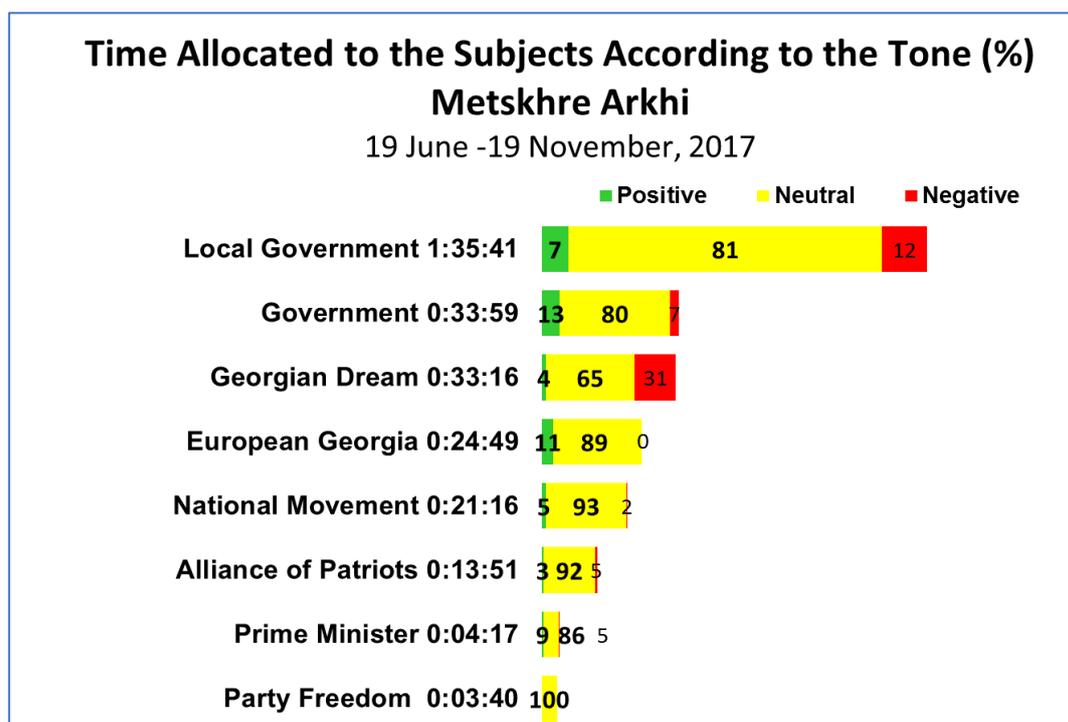
On [October 27](#), the report about the Georgian Dream candidate for the Mayor of Gardabani was shown. He had won the elections with 72% of the votes. The report was of several minutes' long. The presentation of the TV host and the comments of the Mayor elect portrayed him positively.

It is noteworthy that on September 22, there was a report containing commercial content, where one of the appliance shop logo and products were advertised. According to the Law on Broadcasting it is not permitted to launch advertising material in the news program.

## Metskhre Arkhi

### Quantitative Results

Metskhre Arkhi main news program Echo devoted most of the time to the local government. In positive coverage, Government was leading with 13%. The Georgian Dream had the highest rate of negative coverage (31%).



### Qualitative Results

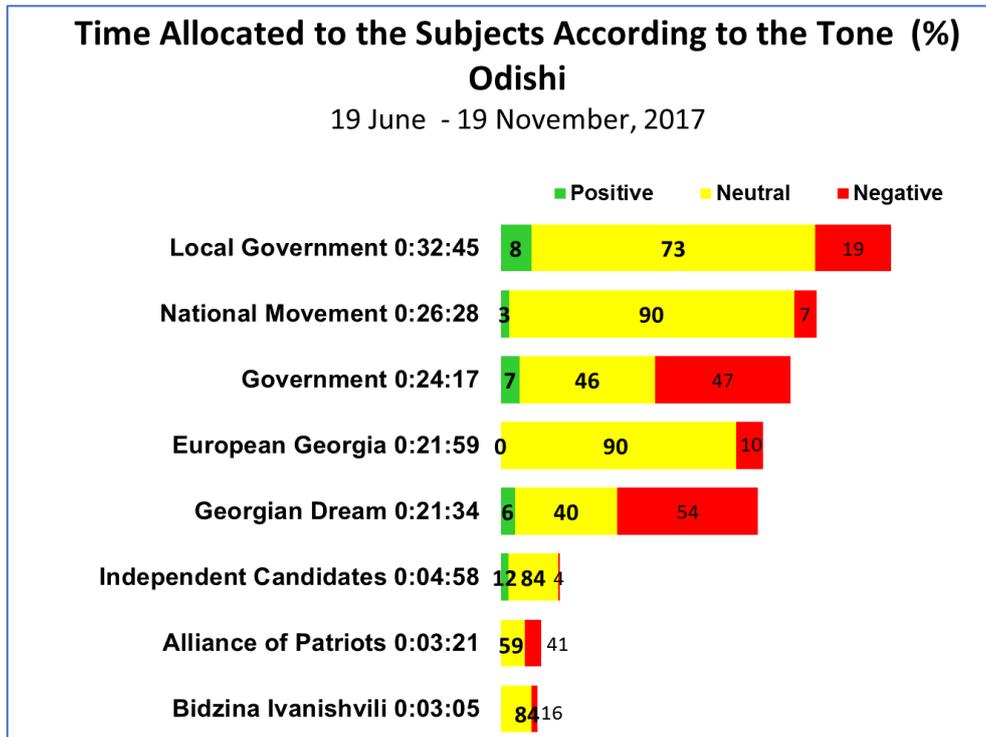
The news program Echo could not cover the current affairs and events of the region properly. The program was compiled of 3-4 local stories. One of these was a story prepared by TV company Borjomi. The Metskhre Arkhi frequently used in the news program, the materials prepared by the Media Development Foundation project - Myths Detector.

Echo was mainly busy with describing the agenda of political parties. They did not investigate important topics for the public and did not cover them in depth. In most cases the news was balanced, but there were exceptions. On [October 26](#), a report showed accusations by opposition representatives against Central Election Commission regarding the election fraud by amending the protocols. Despite the heavy allegations, no response from CEC was often and no attempts were made to get a comment.

## Odishi

### Quantitative Results

The Odishi news program Dro allocated most time to local authorities and covered independent candidates most positively (although they were allocated about 5 minutes only), while Georgian Dream was posed negatively in 54 % of the time allocated to it.



### Qualitative Results

Dro was mainly engaged in covering the meetings and activities of political parties and various NGOs. The important topics for the public were not presented in-depth. Less time was allocated to comprehensive coverage of local self-government elections. The news program was sometimes broadcasted every day, sometimes once in 4 days, and the average duration was 3-4 minutes. Only one news item was broadcasted in the news program. The air was mostly composed of short footages with sound bites. The program often reflected social problems in the population, though they were described only superficially. There were also cases imbalanced reporting when the respondents were criticizing the government and a response from the authorities was not provided.

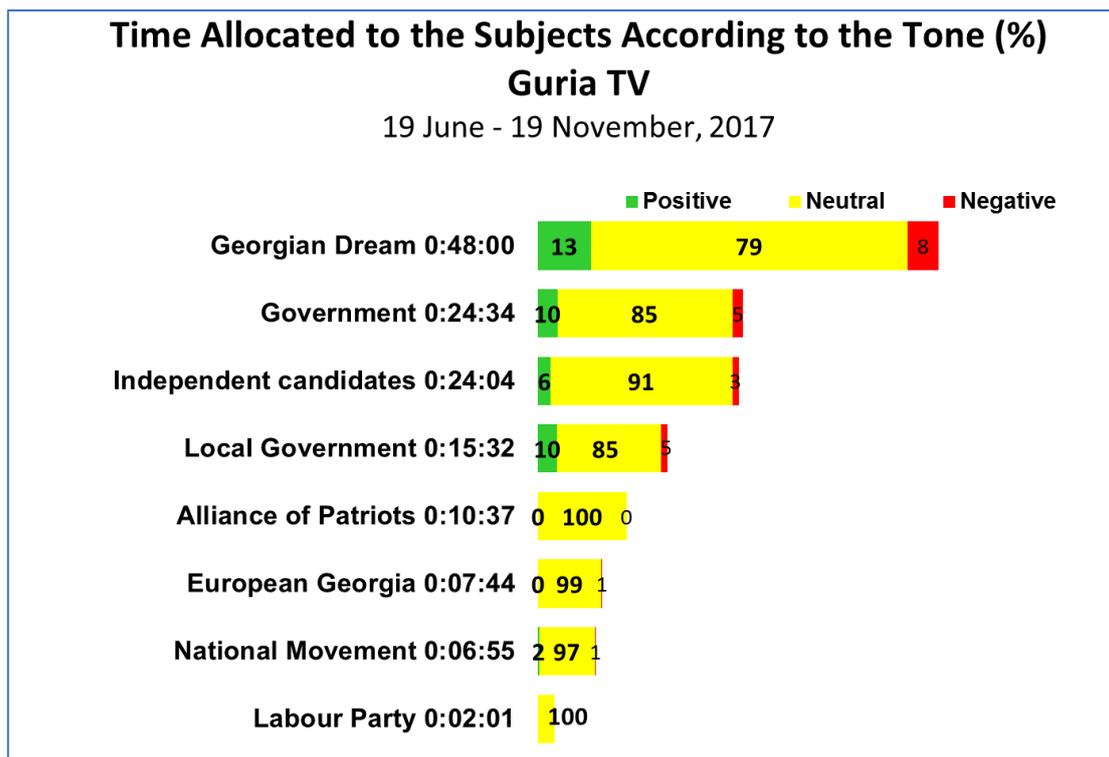
During the monitoring period, the commercial content was broadcasted several times, for example, on [August 27](#); the report said that one of the reproductive clinics in Zugdidi conducted free medical examinations. The journalist's texts were mostly dedicated to the clinic. The journalist said that the clinic is equipped with ultra-modern techniques and treats patients with

American quality. The doctors were advertising the clinic in their comments. During a nearly 4-minute report, the title of the clinic was shown many times, the title of the clinic and contact phone was placed in the lower right corner of the frame, leaving the impression that the report was a commercial. However, the journalist and editorial board did not provide any information to the audience regarding the nature of the material. This story was repeated in the main news release of Odishi on August 29. The Law on Broadcasting explicitly prohibits the release of commercial reports in the news programs. A story aired on October 30, about the construction company Deluxe Development also left an impression of a commercial.

### TV Guria

#### Quantitative Results

Most of the time was dedicated to the Georgian Dream on TV Company Guria. The most positive coverage fell on the Georgian Dream with 13% of the time allocated to it. The most negative coverage was also towards the Georgian Dream.



#### Qualitative Results

During the monitoring period, Guria TV reporting was not extensive. It mainly reported on local news and visits of the central government officials. There were frequent technical problems.

The news was mostly impartial. During the monitoring period, the main newscast of TV company Guria did not actually provide in-depth material, which would provide the audience with detailed

information on variety of issues. Most of the topics were dedicated to Asian tortoise beetle and struggle against it.

The channel mostly covered the members of the authorities or the ruling party, making the high positive tone of these subjects in quantitative results logical.

An example of positive coverage of the Government is the story from September 25, which was dedicated to a rugby game between Ozurgetis Artsivebi and Bolnisi Kochebi. Georgian Dream candidate for the Mayorship of Ozurgeti, Beglar Sioridze was a respondent in this report, speaking about his plans in case of victory in the elections. He was showed positively in this story. It is unclear why it was necessary to have him comment on a story about rugby especially when other candidates did not have the same opportunity.

### **Recommendations**

- During the pre-election period, the TV channels should distribute the time fairly among the election subjects;
- Media should not report with a bias in favor of any political party. Quantitative and qualitative analysis revealed that specific channels are biased in favor of specific political parties, which is inadmissible and should change;
- In so called short footages with sound bites balance is often not provided. Short footages are a regular material prepared by media and the same ethical obligations apply;
- Lack of in-depth, investigative stories remains a problem. Preparation of more such stories are especially recommended to the Public Broadcaster;
- Although the use of hate speech is sharply reduced compared to the previous monitoring, media outlets should work to eradicate hate speech altogether;
- Regional channels should try to provide more comprehensive reporting, prepare in-depth materials, find problems and pose them to those responsible for their solution;
- Regional channels should offer news programs with a consistent schedule;
- Absence of titles and other technical problems should be corrected on regional channels.

# Monitoring of TV Talk Shows



## About the Project

The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics carried out the monitoring of talk shows within the frameworks of the EU-UNDP funded project Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2017 Local Government Elections in Georgia. The monitoring started on 19 June 2017 and was completed on 19 November 2017.

The following TV channels were monitored: Public Broadcaster, Rustavi 2, Imedi, Pirveli, Obiektivi, Ajara Public Broadcaster, TV Channel 25, Rioni, Gurjaani, Guria, Kvemo Kartli, Trialeti, Odishi, and Metskhre Arkhi.

## Methodology

Monitors observed primetime social-political talk shows and news programs, which offered audience more than 10 minutes interviews with respondents on 14 TV channels.

Monitoring subjects were as follows:

- President;
- Government;
- Political Parties.

The monitors observed how the monitoring subjects appeared on the TV programs. Each talk show was evaluated based on the criteria as follows: Whether the topic of the program was relevant, how appropriate was the qualification of the invited guests to the discussion topic, whether the guest selection process was biased, how well was the discussion led by the host, how good were his/her questions, how prepared was the host, was he/she giving the opportunity to the guests to disseminate false information, whether the program was used to propagate hate speech. Overall, whether the audience has obtained any additional information that would enable them to make an informed choice.

## Key Findings:

- Talk shows were dedicated to presentations of the election subjects rather than discussions. Hosts acted exclusively like moderators. Their questions were not related to visions or election programs of candidates. Accordingly, audience could not obtain information on how relevant were the promises of politicians and whether their problems would be eliminated in case of their fulfillment.
- Unlike 2016, national broadcasters offered the audience strictly structured talk shows, which hosted all qualified election subjects. Accordingly, criteria for invitation to the talk shows were clear. During these programs, major attention was paid to the format and not the content. Hosts were rather passive. They only gave general directions for conversation and did not ask follow-up questions even when candidates went off-topic.
- Broadcasting Company Rustavi 2 has not invited Tbilisi mayoral candidate from Movement of Development.
- Broadcasting Company Imedi has not invited Tbilisi mayoral candidates from Movement of Development and Labor Party for debates. The journalist stated that Labor Party candidate was not invited due to the offensive statement made regarding Imedi. However, journalists are often subject to criticism of politicians and this shall not influence selection of respondents, especially during the pre-election period.
- At three channels, which cover entire Georgia - Rustavi 2, Imedi and Public Broadcaster, Tbilisi mayoral candidates had to make similar statements. This occurred because the hosts did not ask critical, evidence-based questions on election programs. Instead, the hosts asked the candidates to share their opinion on variety of topics, which they had done many times previously, both on TV talk shows and in election commercials.
- Superficial questions and lack of preparation were even more obvious when knowledgeable and/or well-prepared respondents and experienced politicians were invited.
- In some cases, political party candidates were invited to the program in a different capacity: musician, journalist and etc. The audience was not informed that they were candidates as well. Girchi representatives were invited to programs particularly frequently. They expressed their opinions as experts, while other political parties were not present.
- Broadcasters mainly paid attention to the first round of elections. Upon its completion they evaluated the results. Second round of elections and participating candidates were not given attention in talk shows.
- Discussions between the candidates participating in the second round were not held at any regional channel, including those where competition between the candidates of the second round was fierce, for example, in Ozurgeti. In between the first and the second rounds of the

elections, Guria TV's talk show was broadcasted only once and only representatives of local Assembly were invited. In this regard, Trialeti was an exception, as it hosted Khashuri mayoral candidates participating in the second round of elections.

- National broadcaster Obiektivi has allocated significant attention to the second round of elections in Borjomi. Alliance of Patriots has made it to the second round of elections in Borjomi and this must have been the main reason of interest for Obiektivi. In total, 91 representatives of this party have participated in the program, while only 8 representatives of other parties have been invited to the show. From 8 representatives of other parties, 3 had joined the show via phone as they were not present at the studio. Also, the program was used to mobilize people to the demonstration organized by the Alliance of Patriots. The program was full of anti-western and anti-Turkish rhetoric, hate speech, offensive vocabulary and unanswered allegations against opponents.
- Apart from Obiektivi, hate speech has been observed in case of several other channels. However, it was mainly used by the respondents. The reaction of hosts was critical and adequate. In some cases, hosts contributed to strengthening gender stereotypes.
- Number of regional channels have completed programs commenced during the pre-election period upon completion of the first round of the elections; some talk shows were aired without a consistent schedule.
- Broadcasting companies Gurjaani and Odishi are exceptions, as they did not offer talk shows to the audience with consistent schedule. Gurjaani aired talk show with invited candidates only once and "Odishi" twice. However, the hosts acted as a moderator and tribune was given to the candidates.
- Regional broadcasters still had significant technical issues related to voice, visual side and branding. All these issues, along with content related problems made programs less attractive to the audience.

### **Public Broadcaster**

During the pre-election period, the Public Broadcaster offered audience the program *Tvitmmartveloba 2017*, which introduced election candidates to the public. Starting from September 18 till completion of the first-round program was broadcasted three times a week. Unlike 2016, when three programs of Public Broadcaster were dedicated to the election topics, including the most positively evaluated program *Interview*, this year, no such hard talk format programs were offered. The new program *Kviris Interviu* started which was aimed at having critical discussions. However, this program was not related to elections. Starting from the same period, talk show "*Aktualuri Tema*" was also launched, which offered interviews with the invited guests.

## **Tvitmmartveloba 2017**

Guests of the program were the mayoral candidates of different cities. Program team visited regions and directly from the site, in open-air studio offered audience vision of different candidates. Equality were ensured in the selection process. In case if one of the invited candidates would not participate in the program, the host would inform the viewers. Each participant was given an equal opportunity to express visions and opinions regarding the discussion topics.

Based on the information published on the broadcaster's website, program envisaged debates among the candidates. However, taking into consideration the format of the program, discussion was not held. Respondents presented only their opinions. Program host was passive, questions for clarification were not asked. During the first block of the program every guest had to answer the same question, how would they resolve this or that problem? Regardless the fact that invited candidates had different visions, all gave the same answer to the question and promised voters to solve whatever problem. General answers were given to 3 questions/topics and taking into consideration the number of candidates, approximately 45 minutes was allocated to this general discussion.

Questions did not derive from the programs and promises of the candidates. For example, on October 9<sup>th</sup>, Gori mayoral candidates stated that in case of success they would build municipal shelter, parks in every village, supply local population with natural gas. The host did not question how would they get required funding. The host did not clarify how realistic was the promise and whether it was within the competences of local authorities.

It shall be highlighted that in the same program on October 9, the candidate from "Dimitri Lortkipanidze- Kakha Kukava- Democratic Movement-Free Georgia" Ioseb Sosiashvili was presented. While presenting his biography, it was announced that he worked as Deputy Head of Shida Kartli Division of the United States Anti-Corruption Department. Sosiashvili has immediately denied the fact of working in the United States and explained that he worked at the Ministry of Interior of Georgia. The host replied that press center has provided the program with the information. It did not occur to the editorial staff of the program that the USA Anticorruption Department could not have Shida Kartli Division.

Due to the format of the program, the host did not have a chance to ask counter questions, even when answers were irrelevant. For example, on October 2, the host asked question to the candidate from Democratic Movement regarding the problem of gasification in Racha, while respondent's answer was related to collection and acquisition of the pinecones.

Questions were mainly identical in all cities and were related to municipal transportation, water supply, urbanization issues. It is obvious that these problems are relevant all-around Georgia, however, there are set of issues in municipalities that are problematic to only one municipality. For example: brown marmorated stink bug is a problem in Zugdidi; in Kutaisi the topic for

discussion is the issue of the city's main functionality: parliamentary, University City or touristic city connected to international airport and etc. Local specifications were not considered in any TV programs. Commonly, different problems raised in vox pops were not covered by the host.

As the program studio was arranged in the open-air, additional problems raised due to meteorological conditions. For example, on September 29, Kutaisi mayoral candidates and journalists had to conduct several-hour discussion in the conditions of strong wind. This resulted in other technical issues, such as sound interruption, shaking images, etc.

It was even more unbearable for Tbilisi mayor candidates to participate in the program on [October 19](#). The stage was set in neighborhood of Metekhi, where number of restaurants are located. During the broadcasting music from restaurants could be heard, which continued for 15 minutes. This was followed by fireworks. Program staff should have assumed beforehand that this could happen in the neighborhood with this many restaurants. It was obvious that candidates were cold. Program staff should have checked the weather forecast and assess possible risks. The program continued for more than 2 hours in 13-degree temperature.

Apart from that, the respondents were placed too far from the host. All these factors contributed to making the program less dynamic. Regardless the fact that the host stated that candidates had the time for questions, they did not use the opportunity to debate. For example, debates were not held between the Rustavi candidates while when they were invited to other channels substantiated discussion took place.

### **Aktualuri Tema**

According to the program format, during the first block questions were asked by the host. During the second block other GPB journalists, GPB analysts or invited guests asked questions. During the monitoring period, this format has been violated twice. In both cases the program was dedicated to the Public Broadcaster. Instead of one guest several guests (GPB management) were invited and questions were asked only by the host. During the reporting period, 4 representatives of government and ruling party and 2 representatives of opposition parties were invited to the program.

According to the description available on the GPB website, main aim of the program was to provide audience with additional information regarding important and relevant topics. However, during the monitoring period, majority of aired programs covered topics irrelevant to the specific day.

For example, at the first program Davit Usufashvili, former chairman of the parliament was invited. He did not cover any of the relevant issues for the day and discussion was limited to constitutional amendments and his future plans. Eka Beselia was invited on the following program. She discussed events of November 7, 2007 and draft amendments to the Law on

Lawyers. It is unclear why Beselia was the relevant guest to speak about events of November 7, 2007.

It is complementary that media tries not to follow the agenda and wants to create it on its own, however the connection between the selected topic and public interest shall be maintained. Media should feel and take into consideration what is public interest in the given period. There was a feeling that during this program guests were not selected in accordance with the discussion topic. Instead, topics were selected based on the guest list.

For example, on November 13 some members of the Government were announced to change. On the same day, Minister of Justice was invited to the program, but the discussion topic was related to establishment of investigation mechanism, which was less relevant to the day. As a result, no major questions related to the upcoming changes were asked. This should have been the main topic of the program.

It shall be mentioned that questions asked by the invited journalists did not differ from the questions asked by the program host. Those were not hot, critical questions; thus it is unclear what is the logic for inviting other journalists and why the host could not ask the same questions.

In some cases, it was impossible to understand criteria for selection of experts to ask questions on the show. For example, on November 7, Irma Chkadua was invited for debates with Eka Beselia. Irma Chkadua, a lawyer is known for loyalty to the government. She is not known for her critical assessments towards government. For example, when public demonstrated against abduction of Azerbaijanis journalist, Aphgan Mukhtarli, Irma Chkadua criticized the wife of abducted journalist and indicated that there were hidden motivations behind those who spoke out to defend Mukhtarli.

She actively called on commencement of criminal proceedings against Rustavi 2 journalist Tamar Bagashvili, who had publicized the information from closed court sitting of so called Cyanide Case. Number of lawyers and civil society strictly opposed to this request. In the information that went public, the witness accused Eka Beselia of corruption. In the mentioned Cyanide Case, Irma Chkadua was prosecution's witness.

She did not oppose to Eka Beselia and the program finished on positive vibes: "We know that Eka [Beselia] in Parliament for several years to come. They lobby the institution of lawyers. Thus, we are not in a hurry, we prefer to reach perfection and adopt the law after".

The host found it hard to ask comprehensive and follow-up questions in time, apply arguments, and broaden the topic. For example, when Minister of Education was hosted, program was basically limited to teachers' low salary and their qualification, while there are a lot of important and relevant topics to discuss in this field. In several cases questions from host and analysts were the same. Several times, question asked was beyond logical development of the conversation.

For example, on November 15, Gigi Ugulava participated in the program. He strictly criticized the government. Journalists acted like government advocates. Their questions mainly concentrated on what happens if Gigi Ugulava becomes the mayor of Tbilisi. Then the host would ask follow-up question such as “what was it like when you were a mayor, was it the same?”

Maka Tsintsadze asked a question impossible to understand: “Do you consider cooperation with Georgian Dream on strategic issues?” Once criticism was heard in response, she changed her question and said that she meant cooperation with any party on the political spectrum and not Georgian Dream in particular. Then she changed the question again and asked who could be Gigi Ugulava’s ideological partner. This dialogue has indicated that the host was unprepared.

Similar case was observed during the first program (6.11), when Davit Usufashvili was asked: “Are you disappointed with 0.76% of Georgian voters?”

-What is this number Maka? - asked the guest.

-0.76%.

-What does it indicate on?

-Percentage of Movement [Usufashvili’s political party]?

-Yes, no let me make it a little clear.

-Yes, please, clarify it for me.

Then Usufashvili went on to talk about creation of his party and choosing the color for the logo.

On November 7, Irma Chkadua stated that several years ago, lawyer Tamar Kutateladze had cursed at the prosecutor and the case is being considered at City Court.

- So, she is still being held to the account for cursing? -asked the host.

Curse is not recognized by Georgian legislation as a criminal offense, accordingly it is impossible for the lawyer to be convicted for cursing. The audience is not required to be familiar with the legislation in details and by listening to this short dialogue, one may think that the lawyer is really convicted of cursing. At the same time, the lawyer Chkadua was talking about was accused of fraud.

Analysts of broadcaster did not distinguish themselves with specific and well-prepared questions either. They used a lot of time on question formulation and tried to highlight their knowledge of political theories. Thus, they asked long, complicated questions. For example, this kind of question was asked on [November 9](#):

*“When we talk about Georgia’s integration in European, cultural, economic and political space, especially in social-economic dimension, as you know European state means a state with high*

*social responsibilities, where supremacy of free market is replaced by the idea of state of well-being. However, during the whole post Soviet Union transition in Georgia, we mainly see deterioration of state of well-being, high social responsibility idea. How do you think, shall the state share the transition model, which it has selected at early stage of transition from Soviet Union format and shall we follow the route of state of no well-being?"*

Analysts clearly belong to the left wing; therefore, their questions were formulated from this point of view. The public broadcaster is obliged to serve interests of people with any ideology. It is also important for audience to have information on ideological preferences of analysts and not to expect that their questions are neutral in this regard.

### **Kviris Inteviu**

During the reporting period, only 2 programs were aired. According to the information published on the website, the format envisages face to face interview with the respondent in a hard-talk format. [The guest of the first program](#) was Vasil Maghlaferidze, director general of GPB. Despite many critical questions that exist in his address, the interview was conducted in an informal friendly tone. The host and the guest spoke from similar points of view and critical questions were not asked.

Host's questions included incorrect information and there was an impression that the broadcaster was misleading the audience on purpose. For example, during the discussion on changes to the Law on Broadcasting, the host asked the director general questions on those articles regarding which there is no difference of opinions. However, more important articles related to the income gained from sponsorship and commercials were not discussed.

Regarding changes related to state procurement procedures, the host has disseminated incorrect information: "in accordance with the existing legislation, public broadcaster is forced to publish entire scenario if it decides to procure TV series. This is absurd and it is obvious as we had to do it a while ago". There is no such indication in the law, in fact, two months ago the broadcaster published the scenario on its own will.

Vasil Maghlaferidze stated that company names do not appear in state tender documentations. He made this statement regarding one of the tenders announced by GPB, where the company owned by the son of former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili was declared the winner. Maghlaferidze's argumentation was that the public broadcaster could not have known which company was participating in the bid. This is not true. Participation in state tenders is not anonymous; however the host did not correct this information as well.

Topic of [the second program](#) was changes in Government and head of the Government Administration Maia Tskitishvili was invited. In general, all important and interesting questions related to the topic have been asked. However, program format envisages hard talk interviews, which did not occur. For example, the journalist did not ask the follow-up questions on the

following statements: respondent said that the conditions in penitentiary system of Georgia make it impossible to merge this Ministry of Corrections with any other Ministry; she also said that only successful European models have been applied regarding the Ministry of Environment. It would be important for the journalist to present evidence on critical conditions of air pollution in Georgia, to indicate that there is no Ministry of Correction in some of the European countries and etc., This would help to reveal the government's attitude regarding these topics.

Upon completion of the interview, the host stated that according to Ivanishvili, he would refuse to give recommendations to the government and asked a question whether former Prime Minister gave recommendations on governmental changes or not. The answer was negative, after which the journalist has finished the program. Host could have embarked on further analysis: assess who had acquired most responsible positions in the Government and ask question on Ivanishvili's possible influence on governmental changes from that perspective.

## **Rustavi 2**

During the pre-election period, the broadcasting company Rustavi 2 has offered audience two talk shows: Archevani with Giorgi Gabunia and Aktsentebi with Eka Kvesitadze. Archevani offered audience candidates' vision and discussed top news; in Aktsentebi discussion was held on variety of topics.

### **Archevani**

Program hosted different party representatives and mayoral candidates. However, it shall be highlighted that representatives of the Movement of Development were not invited. Major part of the program was allocated for candidates' vision; each of them was given an equal opportunity to speak. The host played the role of the moderator and asked each candidate to answer the questions on the ways of solving the problems of population. The questions were selected as a result of the vox pop. Guests offered general promises to resolve parking related issues, drainage system, establish new working places. However, they did not specify how they would do all this. The format did not allow the host to ask follow-up questions.

Passiveness of the host was especially obvious on [October 9](#), when 7 mayoral candidates and their teams were invited. Each of them spoke for approximately half an hour. As a result, audience had to listen to their monologues and promises for 4 hours. The same had been repeated during the pre-election period many times. The journalist spoke for total of 20 minutes only.

With the exception of October 9, in other programs, in the second block of Archevani the journalists were invited from each candidate's region to ask questions. This made this block of the program rather informative and dynamic. However, some questions were too general, for example: "how will you resolve social, transportation and etc. issues."

For this block, it would be better for journalists to know candidates' programs in advance and accordingly ask specific questions. This would enable audience to understand whether the candidate would be able to fulfill the election promises or not. Questions asked to Tbilisi mayoral candidates were comparably critical and specific. This factor enabled government candidate to present his views regarding important and debatable topics.

Upon completion of the elections, relevant topics have been discussed in the talk show and important information was disseminated thanks to this program. For example, during the program of [October 24](#), representative of Georgian Dream, Zakaria Kutsnashvili admitted practice of nepotism and promotion of unqualified personnel in the ruling party.

However, it shall be highlighted that during some programs bias was obvious. For example, Archevani of [November 7](#), was dedicated to arrest of National Movement representative Giorgi Oniani. During the entire block, only representatives of one political party, National Movement members spoke. They accused the government of dictatorship, political persecution, and formation of feudal order, usurpation and other violations. Representative of the government who would be able to answer these allegations was not present and the host did not oppose either.

On [October 31<sup>st</sup>](#), audience was offered an interview with former president of Georgia, founder of National Movement, Mikheil Saakashvili. The host tried to portray him as a hero, but made several factual mistakes: "he [Mikheil Saakashvili] has been living in a tent for a week", or "this can be the last live interview as he can be arrested anytime". Regarding these statements, Saakashvili responded: "let's start from the fact that I do not live in a tent, I have spent there three nights, but I have never declared that I planned to live there... and secondly, who told you that I can be arrested anytime? This is nonsense."

### **Aktsentebi**

During the election period, the first block of the program offered the audience discussions on specific topics. In the second block, Tbilisi Mayoral candidates answered questions of the journalist in a hard-talk format. The program was dynamic and the audience obtained much additional information regarding the topics discussed. The host tried to be pushy and critical, however sometimes opposed the candidates with simple irony instead of factual data and quotes. Also, there were cases when due to the factual inaccuracies the host was criticized by guests. For example, on [October 9](#), during Kakha Kukava's visit to the program, host stated that he was nominated as a candidate by Nino Burjanadze's party, while in fact he is the candidate of the block of two political parties. This seemingly minor mistake enabled the guest to criticize the journalist for being unprepared. Similar accusation was brought to the host by Irma Inashvili (16.09). The host asked the respondent why she and her party did not protest on constitutional amendments, when all other opposition parties and civil society groups protested. The respondent replied that the host was unprepared, as she had actively criticized the process, which was true.

Interviews with Tbilisi mayoral candidates were less focused on specific views of candidates. It would be better to ask more comprehensive and evidence-based questions regarding the promises. Journalist should have held more reasoned discussion that would enable the audience to conclude whether the views of the candidates were relevant.

Upon completion of the first round of the elections, the program was dedicated to various current affairs. According to the host, regardless the invitations government representatives did not participate in the program. Accordingly, criticism expressed against them stayed without response. Hosts questions were reasoned, logical and tried to express entire context of the topic.

### **Imedi**

During the pre-election period, broadcasting company Imedi aired public-political talk show Amomrchevlis Pirispir once a week.

#### **Amomrchevlis Pirispir**

The program enabled political party representatives and mayoral candidates to present their vision to the citizens. However, Labor Party and Movement of Development candidates were not invited to the program. The journalist stated that Labor Party candidate was not invited due to the offensive statement of the party leader made regarding Imedi. The journalists are often subject to criticism of politicians and this fact shall not influence selection of respondent, especially during the pre-election period. Absence of the candidate from the Movement of Development was explained by technical issues which is not an excuse. The broadcaster is obliged to treat candidates equally.

Format of the program was not consistent. In some cases, in the first block, mayoral candidates were invited, while in other cases discussions were held on ongoing events. In some cases, the second block was allocated for presentations, while sometimes the presentations were held in the first block.

The host gave equal time for speech to every guest. Questions asked to the election subjects were general and based on vox pops. For example, how would candidates resolve water supply, street trade, and infrastructure related issues? Factually, the host played moderator's role as critical counter-arguments were not presented. Accordingly, it stayed unclear whether the candidate would be able to fulfill the election promises or not.

Tbilisi mayoral candidate's visit on [October 10](#) also finished without critical questions. Respondents had their own monologues, sometimes did not even answer questions and preferred to discuss other topics. Also, candidates, especially Kaladze and Elisashvili regularly interrupted each other and the host had no control over the situation.

There were cases when respondents made xenophobic and sexist comments. For example, on [September 19](#), Kakha Kukava said that "*we must prevent building Arabian and Turkish districts, this is harmful and we must start deporting these migrants in compliance with law and*

*international standards*". Details stayed unclear as the host did not ask follow-up questions: what was meant under the Turkish and Arabic districts, specifically where were such districts located. How was Kukava going to prevent such constructions "in accordance with law and international standards"? Why the existence of such districts was harmful (if there were any) and how Kukava was going to deport the migrants?

On [September 26](#), Nika Melia, the first number in the party list of National Movement used sexist expression against Marika Darchia, the first number of Georgian Dream. Instead of using her name, Melia referred to her as "Kalbatono" [Madam]. "I do not feel comfortable, first of all because you are a lady [Kalbatoni]"- Melia said. The host did not point out to Melia that both had the same positions in the party list, and it was wrong to attempt to undermine the candidate based on her gender.

It shall be noted that the host's introduction speech on [September 19](#) was manipulative: "*The temptation to support the election campaigns is very high. It took Western countries decades to resolve this problem. While we still live in the country where we often hear that the ruling party uses administrative resources during pre-election period without evidence. Governmental team also does not refrain from excuses*". There are many facts of us of administrative resources, which is confirmed by reports of monitoring organizations and are also reported in media. Consequently, the statement made by the host as if there was no proof on the allegations, gave the audience impression that there were no such violations in Georgia.

Upon completion of the elections, the program was dedicated to ongoing topics, but journalist was still less prepared and acted as a moderator.

### **Kronika**

On Saturday news program Kronika there were cases when the subjects of the monitoring were included into the program and their interviews were offered to the audience. The discussion topic was based on the news and in several cases, there was an impression that the host was biased towards the government representatives.

For example, on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, Irakli Abesadze from European Georgia and Mamuka Mdinardze from Georgian Dream discussed Venice Commission Report. It was difficult for the host to moderate the debate of lawyers. There was an impression that the host was critical towards the opposition rather than the government. The host did not interrupt Mamuka Mdinardze while he tried to discredit the opposition representative based on unreasonable arguments. Mdinardze stated Irakli Abesadze shared the position of anti-western political parties. "*Constitution unites them, in other words, they think as our neighbors in the North? What shall we think in such case?*" The journalist allowed Mdinardze to continue discussion on other topics. If not Abesadze's persistent attempt to react to this allegation, Mdinardzes "argumentation" would remain unchallenged.

Upon completion of the elections, monitoring subjects rarely participated in the program. There was an impression that the main aim of inviting guests was to fill the air time rather than obtain additional information.

### **TV Pirveli**

TV Pirveli offers several talk shows during the day, however only the programs aired after 8 o'clock in the evening were monitored. During August, Dghis Ambebi was aired, while in September broadcasting schedule has changed and different talk show was aired each day - Reaktsia, Khalkhis Pirispir, Politmetri and Pirvelebi. During the pre-election period, the channel tried to introduce to the audience both political parties and mayoral candidates.

Upon completion of the first round of the elections, all programs started to cover ongoing affairs. Thus, content of all talk shows was similar.

### **Dghis Ambebi**

At the beginning of the monitoring process, the program was broadcasted every day. Mainly daily news was discussed during the talk shows. The hosts tried to obtain information from guests regarding the above-mentioned issues. Journalists did not show their bias and were fairly distributing the time among the guests. In most of the cases the guests were relevant.

### **Kalkhis Politika**

The program was broadcasted once a week and envisaged debates between the mayoral candidates as well as discussion on the current affairs. Prior to transition to election format, there were cases when the program was fully based on counter-allegations and disputes, and did not aim to provide audience with additional information. Program of October 4 was an example of such case: for one hour and a half the appointment of theatre art directors was discussed and unreasoned allegations and insults were heard.

Regarding the mayoral candidates, the host was allocating equal time to all guests (this time was not distributed mechanically) and gave the guests the opportunity to answer statements, object to each other and ask questions. It is important that during the program guest had an opportunity to respond to each other and ask counter questions. In some cases, the discussion would turn intense, but the host had control over the situation. Discussion topics included the key issues of the region, where the candidates were nominated. The host asked follow-up questions as well and developed the discussion in logical manner. However, on September 11, when the member of Alliance of Patriots stated that "the city was transferred to Turks" and the city "is headed to the destruction", the hosts did not oppose and simply asked "what do you want to tell the voters?"

Upon completion of the first round of the elections politicians were invited to the show only on several occasions. Again, allegations were heard from the guests. On November 13, governmental changes were discussed during the show. The host asked the representative of the leading party, Gia Volski why was each minister replaced. In his answer, Volski spoke of the personality of the ministers. The host could have paid major attention to professional values of the Minister Gakharia and ask the respondent specifically based on which achievements had the prime-minister selected him to be assigned to the position. The journalist should have asked more critical questions, such as what is the aim of structural changes, how many people will be dismissed upon merger of ministries. Also, the host could have searched for additional information on salaries of the personnel employed at the abolished agencies and ask whether these number would change after the reform.

### **Reaktsia**

Current affairs were discussed and many guests participated in the program. Upon completion of the first round of elections, the politicians rarely participated in the program. In some cases, the discussion was based on allegations and it was less possible to obtain information and analysis. In such cases, the host was unable to moderate the guests. Insults and hate speech were detected.

One example is the program aired on September 21<sup>st</sup>, which was dedicated to so called xenophobic Georgian March. In the program, the number of march representatives dominated in quantity. There was an impression that they were trying to save Georgia, sacrifice themselves to the country and everyone else was against them. Lado Sadagobelashvili's speech was insulting and homophobic. He referred to the brother of Tbilisi mayoral candidate Giorgi Vashadze as a homosexual. The host apologized and promised that she would no longer invite so many guests on air. Despite this, the program ended with Sandro Bregadze's hate speech. The host was unable to stop him. It is the responsibility of the host to select the guests so that their own program does not turn into the hate speech platform. It is also the host's responsibility to oppose to persons who use the hate speech; manage the discussion to show their real face, do not provide them with the platform for discreditation of others and dissemination of inaccurate information.

In some cases, the ground for selection of the guest was unclear. October 24, the election results were evaluated by the artists. Maia Datunashvili was invited to the program as well. The host presented her as a journalist and mentioned that she took part in the elections. It was obviously hard to say whether she spoke as a candidate from Alliance of Patriots or as a public figure. If she was invited as a candidate, then it is hard to understand why other candidates were not invited as well. Tinatin Darbaidze was invited to the studio as well. The subtitles stated that she was a public activist, but personally she said that she was a candidate from Akhali Sakartvelo.

During the same program, the leader of Georgian March was invited to the program, who was distinguished with his homophobic speeches, as usual. It stayed unclear why his position was important for the audience, provided that he is known for regular use of hate speech. The host stated: "it is impossible to air this, we will take you from the air." But this was just a formality.

During the four-months monitoring Gia Korkotashvili visited this show four times. He has not made this much appearance in any other show.

Another program dedicated was dedicated to the campaign against football player Guram Kashia who wore anti-homophobic armband. The host declared that the editorial staff of the program support LGBT community. Nevertheless, Reaktsia was one of the few programs among those under monitoring which was used for dissemination of hate speech.

In some cases, host's questions were too long; in other cases when the respondent would start to answer the question the host would interrupt and jump to another topic. There were cases, when the host would not pay attention to the fact that the guest was starting to talk on desired topic. For example, during the program of October 19, when the host asked chairman of the Parliament, Irakli Kobakhidze, whether he was the protégé of Tbilisi mayoral candidate Kakha Kaladze, chairman avoided answer and started talking about the achievements of the mayoral candidate. The host did not demand answer for the question asked, changed the topic and asked question regarding possible risks of Kaladze moving to the opposition.

In some cases, the host would neglect the program topic and discuss topics suggested by the respondents and ask questions regarding such topics (for example, 19.09).

### **Pirvelebi**

Pirvelebi was hosted by three hosts. The program was aired during the pre-election period and provided political parties with opportunity to present their views. During the reporting period, all major political parties were invited to the program, as well as independent mayoral candidate Aleksandre Elisashvili. Unlike three other programs, which hosted National Movement, Alliance of Patriots and Aleksandre Elisashvili, by the end of the monitoring, parties were given one hour instead of two. The grounds for such unequal distribution of time stayed unclear to the audience.

According to the format, party leaders, mayoral candidates and supporters were invited to the studio. At the beginning of the program, the audience was offered brief background information on each party, after which the parties could present their own vision.

Journalists were asking logical questions and in some cases opposed the politicians quite well. For example, on September 28, the program was dedicated to the development of agriculture and economy, as well as the attitudes of the Alliance of Patriots about attracting investments. The host managed to show how relevant were their promises and visions to the audience, as well as ask interesting questions about their relationship with Russia.

On contrary, in case of the United National Movement (22.09) much time was spent on the issue of who was the party's leader today. Less time was allocated to the party's election program and candidates. Zaal Udumashvili gave a very superficial presentation of his program to the audience. The questions of the presenters were logical, but only gave a general picture. During the program, guest Grigol Vashadze was irritated by the questions and he cursed but the presenters had an

adequate reaction and noted that Vashadze did not act properly. In case of Labor Party, much time was dedicated to the party's experience in self-government elections, which was less interesting in 2017.

Opposition of the hosts towards the European Georgia was very weak. On October 13, major attention was paid to their separation from National Movement and their inter-relations. "You have already asked that question many times, right?" - asked Giga Bokeria who could not hide his irritation. Bokeria joined the program later and this was the question asked many times before him joining (how was European Georgia different from National Movement).

Interview with the representative of the party, Giga Bokeria made the weaknesses of the questions demonstrated. He was not much forgiving towards the journalists. For example, regarding the question "where has the party identified its voters" surprised Bokeria answered: "Geographically? Everywhere".

Regarding party funding, Bokeria said that Davit Kezerashvili did not finance National Movement during his exile. The host recalled party's letter according to which the party suffers financial losses due to Kezerashvili's exile. Bokeria denied this information and said that there was no such statement in the letter. Instead of presenting the letter, which was public, the hosts tried to outsmart Bokeria: "then what kind of losses could the party suffer?"

The day before the elections, Tbilisi mayoral candidates were invited to the program separately and asked to explain why the voters should vote for them. This factually means that election subjects were provided the free tribune. Government candidate Kakha Kaladze has joined the program in original manner. Hosts aired him from his meeting with supporters.

Upon completion of the elections current affairs were covered. Questions were general. Program topic was sometimes unclear as well as necessity of the three hosts.

## **Polimetri**

The program discussed current news with the invited guests. The host was mostly well prepared for the program. Time was evenly distributed to the guests, though the program discussed issues that had already been discussed, including by TV Pirveli itself. For example, such issues included the new constitution, change of the status of the Tabor Mountain and Pushkin Square. Accordingly, the audience did not receive any additional information and analysis. No critical questions regarding the election program were asked.

On October 11, Tbilisi former mayor Gigi Ugulava spoke on projects implemented by him for 15 minutes. Regardless the fact that society has many questions around these issues, the journalist did not ask critical questions on projects. Almost for ten minutes audience listened to Ugulava's monologue. During the same program, another respondent, Zaza Gabunia said that investment package offered by Bidzina Ivanishvili, which includes 8 different projects will employ 22 thousand persons. At a glance, this is an unrealistic number, however the journalist did not ask

additional questions and employment details to enable audience to understand feasibility of Zaza Gabunia's statement.

### Obiektivi

Daily program Ghamis Studia which starts at 22:30 on the TV company Obiektivi was monitored during the reporting period.

#### Ghamis Studia

The program is a platform for only one party, Alliance of Patriots. 91 representatives of the party were invited to the program. From other parties participating in the elections following individuals were invited: Gocha Jojua (New Christian-Democrat), Gubaz Sanikidze (Democratic Movement), Koba Kobaladze (Georgian Dream) and Ani Mirotadze (National Forum). On the election day one representative of Free Georgia and two representatives of Georgian Dream have joined the program via phone.

During the entire monitoring period, the program tried to mobilize participants for demonstrations organized by Alliance of Patriots. For example, on October 25, for above mentioned purposes Irma Inashvili spoke for 45 minutes in monologue. After, the host Bondo Mdzinarashvili joined the program live from demonstration with Irma Inashvili and asked to record another TV monologue in the future. Following days, Irma Inashvili's interview was broadcasted several times, again to mobilize the population.

In general, the presenters and their respondents (members of the Alliance of Patriots) were in complete agreement and virtually no different opinion was heard. Each of them had a chance to disseminate their ideas and inaccurate facts. The topics of the program are often tailored to party activities. The hosts openly expressed their sympathy to Alliance of Patriots. For instance, on September 16, the host referred to Irma Inashvili as a "hero" and the Alliance of Patriots as "force with patriotic aspirations".

On [October 29](#), Bondo Medzmariashvili who in 2016 was a candidate nominated by Alliance of Patriots spoke in a monologue. He used the air to warn the government:

*"I think many people, especially in Georgian government, will have to think that it is necessary to consider requests of "Alliance of Patriots" and their supporters. Otherwise it is natural that demonstrations will become of a larger scale".*

Hosts together with members of Alliance of Patriots criticized National Movement and Georgian Dream. Without any evidence and arguments, they spoke on the deal between "Bokeria and Kvirikashvili", thus it stayed unclear what was the aim of negotiations between the prime-minister and the leader of the opposition party and what was the deal about. They referred to National Movement as "Natsebi", European Georgia- as "Bokeriebi". They referred to National

Movement members as “ladybugs,” “rattle snakes,” and to members of Georgian Dream as “political animals” and “mutants.”

On [October 15](#), the host said: “*as soon as National Movement, these ladybugs, refined rattle snakes realized that they were losing the elections, I mean old nest of National Movement, and then they started move political processes to different direction. Peaceful permanent demonstrations and extreme forms of protest such as hunger strike, yes this is the way we can force the government to go home*”.

On [November 10](#), the host remained silent to the guest’s phrase: “*Georgian people’s genocide was already started, in other words genocide of Georgians during the past years, the last genocide was carried out by Mikheil Saakashvili*”.

Most of the time it was hard to identify the topic of the program, as guests and the host referred to variety of topics and there was no focus.

Several narratives were repeated during the program:

Members of the Alliance of Patriots with the help of presenters spread opinions as if Georgia has no prospects of joining NATO. Dilemma - **NATO or Abkhazia and South Ossetia** was posed; the need for dialogue with Russia was raised, and for this, creation of the new - NATO-Russia-Georgia format was propagated.

The Party members visited Russia. There was an impression that the program was trying to justify this visit. The host also helped and attempted to raise skepticism towards NATO. For example, the host said: *the key to the return of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region is Russia, and if the government and political parties are not able to negotiate with Russia, won't we face a bigger threat?*” After that, the respondent Davit Tarkhan Mouravi disseminated false information as if NATO did not plan to expand, as it did not want additional conflicts with Russia ... “*Such thinking is tragic - how can NATO or UN or anything be exchanged for Sokhumi and Tskhinvali?* ... ”he stated (24.08).

On [October 25](#), Irma Inashvili addressed the chairman of the Parliament to entrust her with “*Abkhazia and Ossetia and direct dialogue with Russia*”. Accordingly, her wish is to have more legitimacy during her visit to Russia.

On [September 1<sup>st</sup>](#), Ada Marshania, who arrived from Russia, was welcomed by the host in Russian with the phrase “S Priezdom” (Welcome back). While speaking about Russian-Georgian relations, the host and the guest used Russian terms. The host did not oppose to the visitor's false information according to which (23:09:58) “We are cooperating with NATO in a way that our militaries die, I think in all the hot spots on the planet”.

**Loss of national values** is the main line of the program and aims to discredit western culture and political system. The guest and the host try to convince the audience that with the Western education the national identity could be lost, because the knowledge obtained there “cannot teach you to be Georgian.” “*Leave it, it is past, aggressive liberalism has massed up the world and*

*humanity is bathing in blood today*”-said Gubaz Sanikide, member of National Forum an no opposition from the host followed ([30.10](#)).

During the program xenophobia, homophobia is commonly heard from the guests and hosts. For example, on [October 13](#), member of Alliance of Patriots Vazha Otarashvili said: *“My friends live in the neighbourhood of sports palace; Iranians live in the half of the building. I am coming from one of my friends, from Dolidze [street], there are only four Georgians in the building, rest are black, Iranians, Indians, Chinese”*.

During the program of [October 13](#), **homophobic expressions, gender stereotypes** were heard regarding the men to be the heads of the family and men losing their functions. The respondent said that: *“for small nations women shall be in the family and take care and reproduce the nation.”* “To oppose” the respondent the host said that the men shall be given back the role of family supporters. The program of [November 2](#) was entirely homophobic. During this program soccer player Guram Kashia was criticized for participation in anti-homophobic campaign. Number of abusive terminology was used against Kashia’s supporters.

### **Ajara Public Broadcaster**

At the TV Channel Ajara, the monitors observed the talk shows – Akhali Sivrtse and Factor, as well as the part of the news release Mtavari, where the monitoring subjects were interviewed. Talk shows were aired only during the pre-election period. Upon completion of the first round of the elections, the talk shows were no longer broadcasted.

#### **Akhali Sivrtse**

Akhali Sivrtse dedicated its time to presentation of election subjects and less focused on discussions. Regardless the fact that the host tried to ask some additional questions, he did not try to oppose to the respondents and gave them free tribune. Consequently, the talk show turned into the platform for election subjects. Along with party leader, party members were presented at the talk show and the leader determined who was supposed to speak, when and regarding which topic. On September 28, when the program hosted the election subject "Zviadi's Path in the Name of the Lord", the program finished so that four guests in the studio not only had no opportunity to express their opinions, but also their identities remained unknown.

At the end of the program, the leader of the Movement of Development Merab Abashidze presented his colleagues one by one, praising them as "good mən", "the bastion of the community" and so on. One of the guests, Makvala Gerdzadze, was appraised as "a very successful housewife". The host did not react to this statement.

It would be better for the host to be prepared, to learn more about the candidates' programs and to ask substantial questions for the program to have logical development. Also, to ensure that respondents give valuable information to the audience and the program is not transformed into a party tribune.

The only role of the journalist was to present questions and control chronometry. Candidates had full freedom to express opinion without counter questions and additional clarification.

For example, on [October 14](#), candidate of Georgian Dream, Gocha Meladze spoke on problems of municipal roads of Khulo region: “*there is no village where concrete roads are not being constructed, where new parks are not built. Places where there were no roads historically, new roads are being constructed*”. Vox pop carried out before the program in local population proves opposite. However, the host did not oppose to the respondent.

There was an impression that the candidates only gave promises and did not pay attention to how would they accomplish these promises, resolve the problems. It would have been better for the host to ask more questions regarding ways of accomplishment of election program and show the audience feasibility of these promises.

Technical problems were observed during the program. More specifically, during the dialogue between the host and the respondent (28.09), there was the picture of other guests in the studio in the shot. When a person was presented, several other people from the audience were on camera and it remained uncertain who was being presented.

### **Factor**

Factor offered the audience discussions on variety of topics. Subjects of monitoring were invited only to several programs. Discussion programs contained less analysis. Host’s questions were very general. The program was no longer broadcasted upon completion of the first round of the elections.

On September 29, the leaders of the parties' lists visited the program. “*Please present yourself to the viewer*” - this is how the journalist started talking to the candidates who responded by presenting their own biography. It would have been better for the host to conduct prior research and present the guests to the audience on her own. After that the journalist was asking standard questions to everyone – “*please underline the main problems*”, etc. There was an impression that the host was just following the predetermined questions strictly and did not ask follow-up questions that would logically follow from the answers.

### **Mtavari Ajarashi/Kviris Mtavari**

The program is of news release format. In some cases, guests were invited to speak on current affairs. Respondents were relevant and were asked adequate and critical questions. Interviews with the program guests were of informational character and aimed to obtain additional information from invited guests.

The host did not allow the guests to speak off topic. For example, on November 18, at the beginning of the program speaker of the Supreme Council wanted to speak of good and important

legislative initiatives. The host shortly reminded him of the program topic and asked to go back to it.

## Rioni

At the TV channel Rioni, the talk show Tema has been monitored, which was aired twice a week.

### Tema

Mayoral candidates of 12 municipalities of Imereti were invited to the program. The host asked broad questions. Discussions were superficial and accordingly, audience did not obtain specific information. Clear example was questions asked to Kutaisi mayoral candidates during the program of October 19: “What are your plans?” “What are you planning to change?” “Are you familiar with Kutaisi problems?” The host shall prepare answers to above mentioned questions beforehand. The host shall know what are the candidates planning, how well they know the region and ask questions accordingly.

During the program candidates promised people to resolve variety of problems; more specifically to transform Kutaisi to “leading city”, increase pensions, etc. However, the host did not ask them follow up questions on how they were planning to accomplish these promises. The host did not try to reveal that such promises were arguably not feasible.

Program of [October 12](#), was a farewell to the incumbent mayor, who according to the host “has established political stability”. Relation between the host and the guest was very harmonious. The host did not try to ask critical questions, prepare documents or facts related to the period of the leadership of the mayor. In fact, the host helped the mayor in telling the audience what was done by him for the city. The questions only served to remind the guest different topics to speak about. The host did not try to specify any issue raised by the respondent or question his successful activities. If negative question was asked, the host would use the phrase: “there are talks” as if to distance herself from the opinion. In some cases, the guest spoke for 8-10 minutes uninterrupted.

Another program which was aired on [October 26](#) was distinguished with its loyalty to government. For 1 hour 6 representatives of governmental party participated in the program. No opposition representatives were invited. The journalist did not oppose to the guests wither. It was possible for the journalist though to ask questions based on past term of the party in the city’s self-government and analyze election promises for the new term in this context. During the monologue journalist decided to mention some problems (water supply, sewerage system and etc.) and hoped for the problems to be resolved. But the host did not ask a single question regarding these topics to the respondents.

Also, the journalist often expressed personal opinion regarding different topics. In most of the cases the speech was pathetic. For example, the journalist said: *“healthy blood used to be transfused to the capital from Kutaisi and we are proud of it”*.

Most of the time host's questions were complex and combined multiple questions. It would have been better for the guests and audience to be focused on the specific question. Otherwise, respondent tend to choose the segment of the question they like most and ignore the rest. The questions of the host were sometimes very vague, for example: *"Baghdati is a homeland of wine, and nuts. We know the problems related to the nuts ... The problem of nuts and tortoise beetles, which is very disturbing for the population and I have not mentioned the vine in vain. We remember the periods when the population cut vineyards. Do you have a plan to bring our 22 / 29 wine to the European market? I know that separate families, etc. have brought their wine to the European market. But you as a local self-government representative and candidate for Baghdati Mayorship what ways will you find in this direction and how will you solve the problem of tortoise beetles in the nearest future?"*(28.09).

### **TV Channel 25**

Program Sazogadoebrivi Positsia was monitored on TV 25. The program aired twice a week in the beginning of the monitoring and then three times a week. The mayoral candidates of different cities were invited.

#### **Sazogadoebrivi Positsia**

During the program Ajara Municipality mayoral candidates presented their promises to the audience. Sazogadoebrivi Positsia was a program which has improved during the monitoring period. If during September and first half of October host's questions were general and made impression that the journalist was not well prepared, starting from second half of October the problem was eliminated and program became more interesting.

During pre-election period Sazogadoebrivi Positsia offered audience election program of the candidates. Existing problems were discussed in the program and minor attention was paid to the ways of their elimination.

Kakha Tsiskaridze was invited to the program of [19 September](#). He originally wanted to run independently as Batumi Mayoral candidate and finally ended up running for the party Georgia for Unity and Development. The host did not ask Tsiskaridze based on what shared values he had chosen to participate in the elections in the name of the given party; whether he had ideological agreement with the party on the most critical issues. The host did not ask any question even after Tsiskaridze mentioned that Batumi Mayor should not be a politician. The host did not even ask a follow-up question after on the initial question about plans to cooperate with other parties Tsiskaridze responded that he offers the unity to the society and his main stronghold would be Batumi population. How he was going to unite the population remained unclear.

In some cases, the host could not control the discussion. For example, on [October 9](#), host could not moderate when Georgian Dream and National Movement representatives were engaged in mutual allegations.

As mentioned above, the condition was improved by the end of October. The host asked logical, to-the-point questions, tried to specify information, opposed to dissemination of false information. For example, on October 18, representatives of National Movement stated that reform on land property was one of the most successful projects of the National Movement government. The host stated that reform was not implemented and opposed to respondents by presenting specific examples. In general, dynamic and interesting discussions were held between the candidates.

Upon completion of the elections, the program concentrated on current affairs in which civil society actively participated via phone calls.

There was one case when sexist expressions were heard and even host supported reinforcement of stereotypes. During the program of [October 24](#), priorities of female candidates and voters have been discussed. The program started with the video where the journalist repeated the opinion of female member of the Assembly “ *a woman shall be the mother of the family in the first place, a spouse; and then use her entire skills and talent for the society.*”

A representative of a non-governmental organization has presented the survey prepared on gender issues. Based on the survey results major necessities named by females were sewing shops, beauty salons etc. The host made a comment which enforced stereotypes: “*very feminine requirements*”, what is unacceptable from the journalist. During the entire program, journalist’s questions and phrases proved that host was unprepared, insensitive to gender and supported dissemination of stereotypes regarding women.

Upon completion of the elections, one block of the program was dedicated to new programs of ministries of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, based on budget 2018. Discussion was dedicated to different programs envisaged in the budget. More specifically, planned constructions, projects to be funded, etc. All the above mentioned is reflected in published budget project and is available to all interested persons. It would be important for media to analyze each program and not only present. It would be good if the minister had opponent in the studio, at least a representative from an opposition party. This would make the program rather informative for the audience. Also, it would not allow the government representatives to speak only on positive things and promote themselves.

### **Trialeti**

Two programs of TV company Trialeti have been monitored –Ganskhvavebuli Azri and Shabatis Studia. The first program envisages discussion with several guests, while the second program

offers tet-a-tet interviews with several guests. Both programs are aired once a week and they have the same host. Programs had major technical problems: extra noise was heard, microphones did not work properly and etc.

### **Ganskhvavebuli Azri**

According to the format of the program, several people were invited to talk about the selected topic, including representatives of political parties. During the election process, the channel offered audience sort the format of a debate, however the host did not ask reasoned, critical, evidence-based questions deriving from candidates' visions. The journalist was not interested in resources the candidates were going to use to accomplish their promises. In majority of cases the host was unprepared for debates. Acted as a moderator and only controlled the time.

For example, on [October 13](#), the host asked the guest whether he had identified problem of Khashuri and if these problems have been included in election program. Main function of the journalist is to study the pre-election program, acquire information regarding the program and ask questions from the perspective of its feasibility. On questions formulated in this manner all candidates gave positive answers, thus audience did not obtain relevant information.

Even when current affairs were discussed during the program, there was impression that the program did not have a logical development. The host was not prepared, questions were general, the host did not ask follow-up questions and did not demand evidences on the allegations voiced against opponents. The program was accompanied by allegations from the side of respondents. Accordingly, the audience could not obtain comprehensive information regarding discussion topic.

For example, on [September 29](#), the journalist asked the Gamgebeli about the allegations coming from the representative of European Georgia. According to the allegations, Gamgebeli built the house for his mother-in-law from the municipality budget. Gamgebeli denied this fact. There was no research on this conducted by the journalists even though this case was known prior to the program. It remained unknown whether it really happened, what amount of money was spent on construction of the house of Gamgebeli's mother-in-law and how these funds are linked to the state budget.

Program of November 10 was much better and was dedicated to second round of Khashuri mayoral candidates. Discussion was related to relevant topics and journalist tried to ask follow-up questions and obtain specific answers. However, when fierce debate was held between the guests the host could not manage the situation.

### **Shabatis Studia**

Representatives of different parties were invited to the program. The host asked each guest questions separately. These were not critical questions characteristic to hard-talk format.

Accordingly, it stayed unclear why the guests were invited in separate programs and not in the same program to have the opportunity to debate.

In some cases, topics selected for the program were not relevant. For example, during the program of [October 14](#), the host presented the guest in following manner: *“Gori, Shida Kartli and entire Georgia knows him.”* This indicated to lack of professionalism, since obviously not everyone realized who was this person. It appeared later that his name was Traiel Gurgenzidze and he was the member of Georgian Dream in 2012 and was appointed as Rtsmunebuli of Mejvriskhevi. He was arrested in 2013 for taking a bribe. Gurgenzidze declared that Georgian Dream staged him and got rid of him based on false accusations. It was unclear why it was important to recall these events in pre-election period. At the end of the program it was revealed that Gurgenzidze was the candidate from Movement of Development. Overall, there was an impression that the program was dedicated to promotion of the Movement of Development and demotion of Georgian Dream. It is noteworthy, that the founder of Trialeti is Badri Nanetashvili, also a candidate in Gori from Movement of Development. By the end of the program the journalist asked the respondent: “Has the Georgian Dream justified your hopes?” This question came after the respondent spent 25 minutes on speaking about how disappointed he was with the Georgian Dream and how they imprisoned him based on false accusations.

Nanetashvili was also invited to the program during the monitoring period. The host did not ask him critical questions regarding information disseminated in media that his nomination as the candidate was attended by civil servants from Gori municipality and he was accused of using administrative resources. The host did not remind the audience of Nanetashvili’s relations to National Movement, while he was the member of the Parliament from UNM.

The host’s questions were mainly vague and the content was hard to understand. Several minutes were dedicated to dialogue between the respondent and the presenter when the respondent tried to understand the question (11.11).

In general, instead of critical questions and discussion of election programs, the host was interested in issues such as why the National Movement candidate decided to hold the door-to-door meetings with population instead of calling on a large-scale meeting; what are public attitudes in general, with how many mandates the party plans to enter the representative body, etc.

### **Kvemo Kartli Television**

During the pre-election period the television offered audience program Archevnebi 2017 which was aired three times a week. Mayoral candidates of different municipalities, Rustavi majoritarian candidates and Assembly membership candidates participated in the program. The program was not broadcasted after completion of the first round of the elections.

## Archevnebi 2017

At the beginning of the program, the brief biography of each candidate was presented to the audience. The following type of information about the candidate was offered by the host: *"candidate from Georgian Dream, Davit Rekhviashvili has graduated from honors and was actively engaged in the process of orthodox church construction in Gardabani region, etc."* On [October 17](#), it was announced that the candidate of European Georgia Vakhtang Kebabze worked at Iakob Tsurtaveli municipality. There is no such municipality; however, the staff did not question such title. In Rustavi municipality, there is the administrative unit of Iakob Tsurtaveli.

The host was passive, did not ask reasoned and critical questions. Questions were prepared beforehand. Similar question were asked to the National Movement, Government or Alliance of Patriots. This made the program very boring and predictable.

The fact that the host's questions were predictable was obvious during the program of [October 17](#), when the host gave time to candidate of Georgian Dream, Davit Ishkhneli and he read his answer from a paper prepared beforehand. *"Which problems would you distinguish?", "How are you planning to resolve these problems?"* ... these are the questions which the host asked the candidates and then allowed them to speak on desired topics. Regardless the fact that the only role of the host was to control and distribute the time, the journalist could not control the program. The guests debated, sometimes spoke simultaneously. On October 9, it took the host several minutes to announce the commercial break.

Program of October 11 was more dynamic and the host opposed to the candidate of Georgian Dream, when one stated that in the specific region asphalt was laid in yards. The journalist had different information.

Sexist and stereotype attitude was observed in two programs. On [October 18](#), the host completed the program with the following question: *"What field would you trust the women with, Mr. Irakli?"* The respondent's reply contained gender stereotypes. He said that women would manage cultural and social directions. The host did not ask the respondent why only these areas could be "trusted" to women and how was this approach justified. According to the [Guidelines of Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics](#), media should fight against gender stereotypes and should in no way support them. The material should not strengthen the stereotypes regarding the roles of men and women in a society.

Relatively different was the format of the final program, when all mayoral candidates of Rustavi were invited and several journalists from the television were asking the questions. During this specific program, the journalists did not ask comprehensive questions and did not cause any discomfort to the respondents. Critical questions were asked by the candidates. One of the journalists asked the candidate what was his plan regarding youth issues and whether these topics were covered by the election program. It was not that the journalist provided the platform for the

candidate. She had no information about the election programs and did not know which issues were considered in them.

Accordingly, platform was fully available for the parties, program analysis was not offered to audience and relevancy of the debates stayed unclear.

### **Channel Nine**

Monitors observed program Dialogi aired by the broadcasting company Channel Nine, which was broadcasted from September 21<sup>st</sup> till November 3<sup>rd</sup>, once a week.

#### **Dialogi**

During the pre-election period representatives of different parties and candidates were invited. It shall be highlighted that in several cases invited respondents refused to participate in the program. For example, only two invited guests agreed to participate in the program of September 21<sup>st</sup>. In the second program, Aspindza and Adigheni mayoral candidates were invited. However, only one of the 5 mayoral candidates from Aspindza took part in the program and only two mayoral candidates participated from Adigheni. The host informed the audience regarding this fact.

The host did not ask critical questions, did not elaborate, did not oppose to the candidates who promised to solve all the problems, i.e. increase the pensions. The host did not ask from which pension fund and / or financial sources would candidates plan to do this. One of the candidates said on [September 29](#) that Vale should become a “Leading City”. It was his answer to the host's question on what was the focus of their election plan. Candidate did not provide more details on how this should be achieved and the host did not ask for more clarification.

On [October 27](#), program about election results was accompanied by allegation from invited politicians. During the pre-election period, blue linen distributed in Akhaltsikhe region was announced as bribery of voters, however it stayed unclear what linen they were talking about. It would be better if the host gave audience more information on when and why was this linen distributed. Instead of asking additional questions, the host accepted this information as a fact.

Journalist's questions during the program of [November 3<sup>rd</sup>](#) were general as well. Program was dedicated to evaluation of work carried out by Akhaltsikhe mayor during one year. Even in this case, the journalist gave the respondent full freedom to speak in desired direction. For example, *“How would you evaluate your governance period?” “How different you are from your predecessors?” “How will Akhaltsikhe citizen remember you?”*

Program of October 13 was dedicated to needs of women. Along with Akhaltsikhe mayoral candidates, representatives of variety of female communities were invited as well. The host did not introduce the female guests to the audience and till the end of the program it stayed unclear

who were these women. In the beginning of the program the host announced that “female needs” would be discussed, however discussion was held on everyone’s needs. Women representing different communities asked questions instead of the hosts.

### **Guria**

During the pre-election period, the broadcasting company Guria aired the talk show Tkventan Ertad, which introduced candidates to the audience.

### **Tkventan Ertad**

The program was aired during the pre-election period. Regardless the fact that Guria is one of few regions where second round of elections was held, the program was aired only once before the second round of the elections. Members of Assembly were invited to the program and debates with candidates of the second round were not organized. As the host has noted, the candidates declined the invitation.

Host’s questions were general, opposition with arguments was not observed, guests were given opportunity to discuss desired topics. The host asked questions on candidates’ programs, such as how would they resolve the problems, or would their promises resolve the existing issues.

It would be better for the host to be prepared, research on candidates’ programs and ask questions accordingly.

For example, on [October 13](#), during the visit of Ozurgeti mayoral candidates, candidate of European Georgia said that he would establish new recreational areas, culture, relaxation and amusement centers for youth and “plenty of sports stadiums”. It stayed unclear how many is “plenty”? How many recreational and relaxation centers will be built? Specifically, where? How much will this project cost? - the host was not interested in above-mentioned details.

During the same program, pro-Russian messages were heard from Labor Party candidate. Candidate said that Russian market shall be opened as this is the only cure for economy of Georgia and upon commencement of negotiations with Russia occupation problem will be resolved as well. According to the candidate *“nowadays Turkey is also an occupant of Georgia, it has occupied 15% of the country territory”*. The only person who opposed to this statement was candidate from European Georgia. The host silently listened to the dialogue and did not oppose by counter-arguments.

In some cases, guests spoke simultaneously, interrupted each other; jumped from topic to topic, it was unclear what were they arguing about. The host could not control the debates, only said: “Please!”, “Please let him/her speak!”, “Do not interrupt!” - host’s calls were neglected.

## Gurjaani

During the entire pre-election period, broadcasting company Gurjaani has aired only one program and Gurjaani municipality mayoral candidates were invited. There was an impression that the program was broadcasted in order to avoid sanctions from National Communications Commission. According to the legislation every broadcaster is obliged to hold debates between the candidates during the pre-election period.

10 candidates were invited to the [program](#). However only 8 participated. The program continued for one hour. During 30 minutes, all candidates answered the questions about what they were offering to the voters. During other half an hour, guests were given opportunity to ask questions to each other. Accordingly, role of the host was passive and was limited to giving the speech to the guests. One of the candidates declared that he had nothing to offer and did not hope to win. The host did not oppose to such statement adequately. In the end, it appeared that candidate nominated himself in order to simply join the program and denounced his own candidacy during the program.

Instead of promises and visions, candidates spoke on issues and despair of the society. The host did not ask questions regarding the program or even regarding any factual circumstances.

One of the candidates said that the current government takes shares from implemented project funds; referred to the governor as “Loti” [drunkard], “Basiaki” [Alcoholic]; referred to Assembly chairman as “Mkvdarze Venoki” [Wreath on the dead man]. However, the host did not call on proper expressions and did not demand evidences for such allegations.

During the second block, the host gave each candidate a chance to ask each other question. However, number of guests did not use such opportunity and time was dedicated to general conversation. Rest of the conversation was used for allegations.

When the host is aware of candidate’s debating skills and opposing capabilities it is better for the host to ask questions in person and do not allow participants to speak of uncertain topics.

The program had major technical issues- the sound was not heard at all. In general, the audience did not receive any specific or general information regarding candidates’ vision. There was impression that this program was broadcasted in order to simply comply with legislative requirements.

## Odishi

During the pre-election period, broadcasting company Odishi aired social-political talk show only twice. Leaders of political parties were invited on [October 12](#) and Zugdidi mayoral candidates on [October 17](#). Each program continued for 3 hours. It was too lengthy, especially considering that only broad questions were asked, such as what is the candidate’s vision regarding specific problem resolution.

During the visit of mayoral candidates, it took 18 minutes to answer one question about their plans. Apart from this question, the host asked only one question during the program which was based on vox pop. More specifically, the question was: how would they resolve the problems

mentioned in vox pops. The program envisaged that other journalists from the channel would also ask questions. On October 12, the first journalist who was present at the studio from the very beginning asked the question only at 1:41. Second journalist welcomed the audience after 2 hours and 12 minutes. It is hard to understand why the journalists had to wait in the studio if they could ask their questions only by the end of the program. Apart from journalists, questions were asked by the representatives of non-governmental organizations. In both cases questions were general. For example, how would the candidates resolve the issue of street trade, integration of persons with disabilities and homophobia related issues? It is unclear why the host could not ask the same questions.

None of the questions was based on the candidates' election promises, argumentation was not heard, the candidates were not opposed even when questions were not answered and they simply acknowledge that this or that problem exists. For example: persons with limited abilities shall be integrated into the society and violence towards "that kind of people" is unacceptable. By saying "that kind of people" candidates referred to LGBT community.

As a result, the program was very unprofessional, too long, did not include analysis, thus did not allow the voters to obtain information that would enable them to make informed decision.

### **Recommendations**

- The main goal of the talk show is to provide audience with the information which will enable voters to make informed decision. Therefore, the program shall offer the audience comprehensive analysis of the topic, additional details, election program analysis and vision of the candidates. The election candidates shall not be provided time only for self-presentation.
- In order to achieve these goals, it is better to hold thematic and focused discussions with the candidates and party representatives. This will enable the hosts to be better prepared for the program. The main function of the host is not only to be the moderator, or give the speech to other guests but to ask critical questions, oppose, present arguments and show the audience how relevant are the candidate's promises; whether the ways of solution offered by them are feasible.
- Prior to the program the host shall prepare evidence, learn candidate's program, elaborate the questions based on this knowledge and do not ask broad questions like how the candidate is going to resolve existing issues, thus giving the candidate a tribune and freedom to use the airtime.
- The broadcaster is obliged to provide audience with the information, distribute the airtime fairly among all active candidates, even if they have negative attitude towards the channel.
- When the subject of allegations is not present at the program, the host shall present all possible arguments on his/her behalf, would that be quotes or previous comments of this person.

- When the format is hard talk, it is better for the journalist to select specific topic, regarding which the journalist will obtain all essential information. For this kind of program, the host should be especially prepared. He/she should conduct thorough research to be able to ask critical questions, oppose with relevant facts, data, quotes or archive material, if necessary and obtain to-the-point answers to the questions.
- The second round of the elections was as important as the first round. Accordingly, it is very important for channels broadcasting in the area where the second round takes place, to allocate time for candidates of the second round and provide additional information to the audience.
- The broadcaster should not allow the candidate to use hate speech. Invitation of persons well-known for homophobic or xenophobic speech shall be justified.

## Monitoring of Radio Channels



Internews-Georgia is carried out the monitoring of radio channels within the frameworks of the EU-UNDP funded project Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2017 Local Government Elections in Georgia. The monitoring started on 19 June 2017 and was completed on 19 November 2017.

Monitoring was carried out on 14 radio channels that air the evening news: *Radio 1 (Public broadcaster)*, Imedi, Fortuna, Liberty, Palitra, First Radio, Maestro, Voice of Abkhazia, Old City (Kutaisi), Rioni (Kutaisi), Atinati(Zugdidi), Hereti(Tbilisi/ Lagodekhi), Marneuli, Ajara(Batumi, public broadcaster of Ajara ).

### Monitoring Methodology:

Monitoring Methodology of news programs on radio channels encompasses quantitative and qualitative research components. Quantitative monitoring includes numeric indicators, such as the time allotted for individual respondent (seconds), tone (positive, neutral, negative) and direct/indirect coverage i.e. who speaks about the person, himself/herself or another person.

Qualitative monitoring is used to assess the efficiency of media outlets in terms of those indicators, such as ethical and professional standards which is difficult to be estimated quantitatively. Namely, great attention is paid to accuracy of the *information*, balance, bias, *manipulation* with sound / music and any other factor, which may influence the quality of the information.

### Monitoring of radio channels during the period from 19 June to 19 November revealed the following key findings:

- Most time was dedicated to the government and local authorities and to Georgian Dream, United National Movement and European Georgia.
- Polarization was not observed in reporting; however, the non-parliamentary opposition parties were attributed less attention;
- Most radio broadcasters worked impartially, however, as in previous years, journalists lacked pro-activeness;
- On Election Day, comprehensive and analytical coverage was prepared by several radio channels. Most of them covered ongoing events superficially as they did throughout the pre-election campaign;
- Most of the radio broadcasters did not allocate time to the second round of elections;

- Radio broadcasters did not demonstrate competitiveness. Journalists rarely prepared exclusive stories. Information broadcasted on various channels was often similar;
- Journalists avoid personal evaluations onto the news facts and never express biased attitude towards any of the political forces;
- Meeting of politicians with the local population were intensively covered; however, election campaigns as well as mayoral candidates' views were not discussed.
- Less time was given to in the news from the regions, social issues and minority problems;
- The reporting in the pre-election period was similar to the reporting after the elections. No notable changes were observed.

### *Radio-1 (Public Broadcaster)*

***Radio-1 covered current events impartially. In contrast with the previous years, a chronometry of news broadcasts increased by several minutes which enabled journalists to discuss topics more widely and show different positions. Notwithstanding the fact that news broadcasts have become relatively diverse, shortage of critical questions still remains a big problem.***

Broadcaster dedicated 11 hours and 37 seconds to the subjects of monitoring. 24 % out of the time was spent on Georgian Dream- Democratic Georgia, 17 %- on Government and 10% on United National Movement. Other political parties participating in elections were given 22 %.

Although the broadcaster actively covered current events and election campaigns, little time was allocated to mayoral candidates. 47 minutes in total were attributed to mayoral candidates of Tbilisi, whereas the activities of mayoral candidates of other self-governing cities were not covered at all.

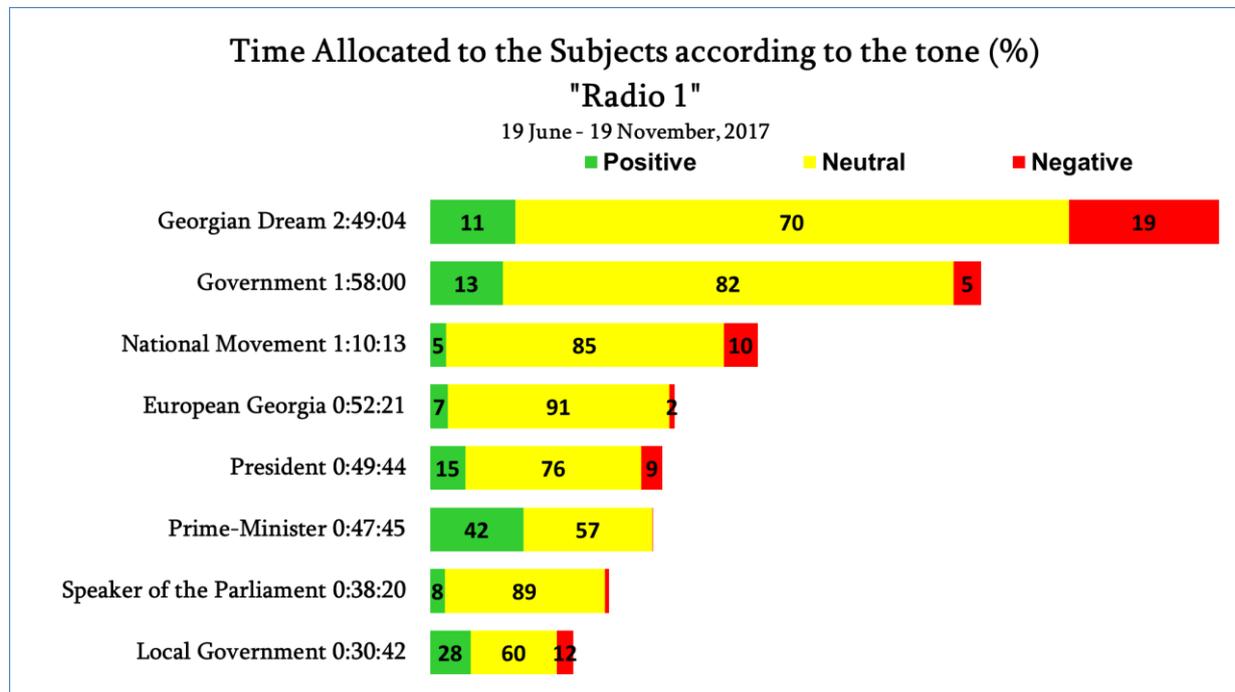
Journalists mostly quoted the politicians' statements by themselves, which showed the neutral tone and indirect speech to an excessive degree (average 80 %).

The radio broadcaster covered current events impartially. The journalists broadcasted only recordings of politicians making promises to the locals. There was no story prepared where election programs would be critically reviewed.

Both rounds of elections were thoroughly covered. Journalists covered election process in Tbilisi as well as in regions, assessments of observers and NGOs, outlooks of various entities participating in elections.

The lack of analytical reporting as well as stories social problems, needs of *vulnerable groups* still remains a problem for Radio-1. Unfortunately, broadcaster couldn't manage to focus on these topics in the context of election.

Journalistic standards were protected in reporting. As in previous years, it did not demonstrate biased attitude towards any of the political forces. Hate speech and cases of manipulation with voice /music did not occur.



### *Pirveli Radio*

*Pirveli Radio intensively covered the news. In contrast with the previous years, the broadcaster prepared more balanced news coverage, however they lacked analysis and precision. The Journalists never asked critical questions and were not pro-active.*

The radio channel mainly allocated totally 25 hours and 15 minutes for the subjects of monitoring. Most amount of the airtime was dedicated to Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (24%), followed by the Government (16%), United National Movement (13%) and European Georgia (10 %).

Throughout the monitoring process, Georgian Dream had the highest percentage of negative coverage (36%). Though opposition representatives criticized the government, their responses to comments were often omitted. Accordingly, the unequal distribution of allotted time for direct speech was noticeable: United National Movement (62%), European Georgia (65%), and Georgian Dream (30 %).

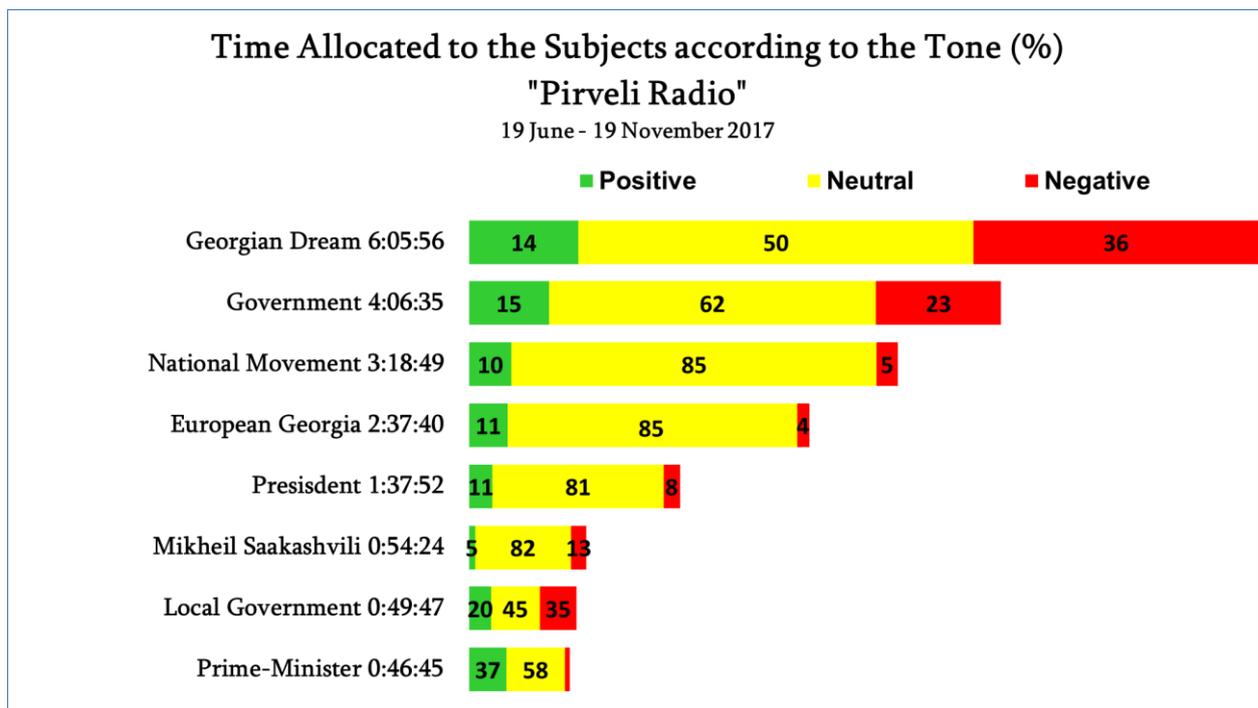
Pirveli Radio news coverage airtime was mostly taken by the mayoral candidates of Tbilisi. Compared with other channels, the most time was spent on: Kakha Kaladze - candidate of the ruling party with 21 minutes. He was followed by mayoral candidate of European Georgia with 14 minutes airtime and Zaal Udumashvili, the mayoral candidate of the United National Movement with 13 minutes. However, news coverage can be assessed as superficial. It

broadcasted only audio recordings of politicians making promises to the local population, but the journalists never asked questions how exactly they were going to solve the problems and make real the promises they had made.

The broadcaster covered two rounds of elections thoroughly. The radio listeners had opportunity to hear comments of the government, the opposition and the non-governmental sector.

Over-the-air broadcast was greatly balanced. The journalists didn't express impartial bias towards the political forces. Broadcasts also voiced statements from the non-governmental sector, but journalists didn't check any information or expand on details.

If the journalists paid more attention to the issues beyond those that are discussed at press conferences, the broadcasts would be more analytical and interesting.



### ***Radio Palitra***

***Radio Palitra intensively covered the news. Unlike the previous years, the journalists were not distinguished with their pro-activity and a number of exclusive stories decreased. They hardly ever asked critical questions and thus neutral tone significantly increased.***

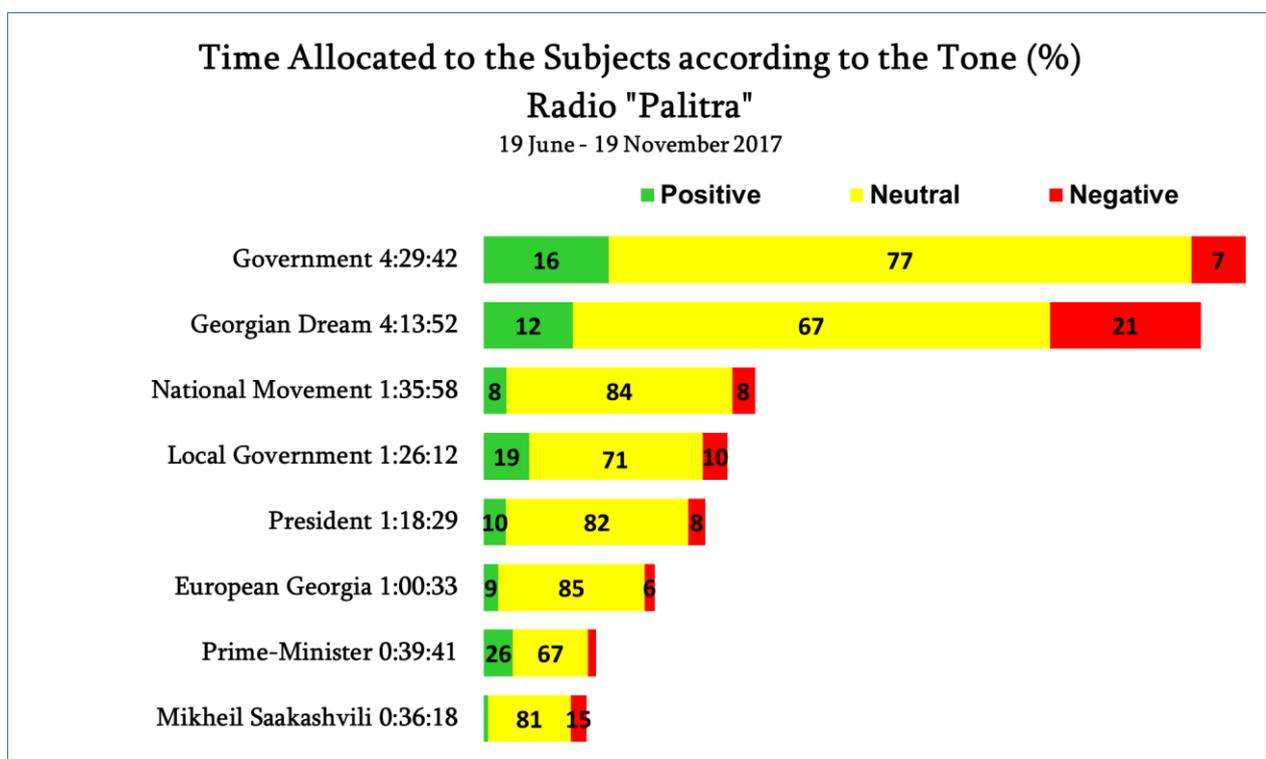
**Radio Palitra** dedicated the allotted time of 18 hours to the subjects of monitoring. 25 % of the airtime was dedicated to Government coverage, 24 %- Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia, 9 % was given to United National Movement and non-parliamentary opposition had only 7 % of the whole time. The entities of monitoring were entitled to have an equal opportunity of direct speech on average 24 %.

Election campaign was superficially covered and the station mainly focused on covering candidates' statements. Among Tbilisi mayoral candidates, Kakha Kaladze, the candidate of the

ruling party and Alexander Elisashvili, an independent candidate, were given over 5 minutes. As for regional election campaigns, they were not broadcasted at all. The Radio broadcaster drew less attention to the social issues of vulnerable groups.

Radio Palitra intensively covered both two rounds of elections. Journalists provided radio listeners with exhaustive and impartial information about processes taking place at polling stations in Tbilisi and regions.

In the monitoring period, listeners had chance to listen to the assessments of politicians, nongovernmental sector and expert decisions. There were no cases of biased coverage. However, in accordance with the positive tendencies revealed in the previous years, there were more expectations towards the radio broadcaster that it would cover the events critically and provide comprehensive information concerning pre-election campaign.



### ***Radio Liberty***

***Radio Liberty enabled listeners to analyse ongoing process in the country. Journalists prepared exclusive stories as well. Neither regions nor their problems appeared to be beyond attention. As in previous years, little time was dedicated to pre-election period.***

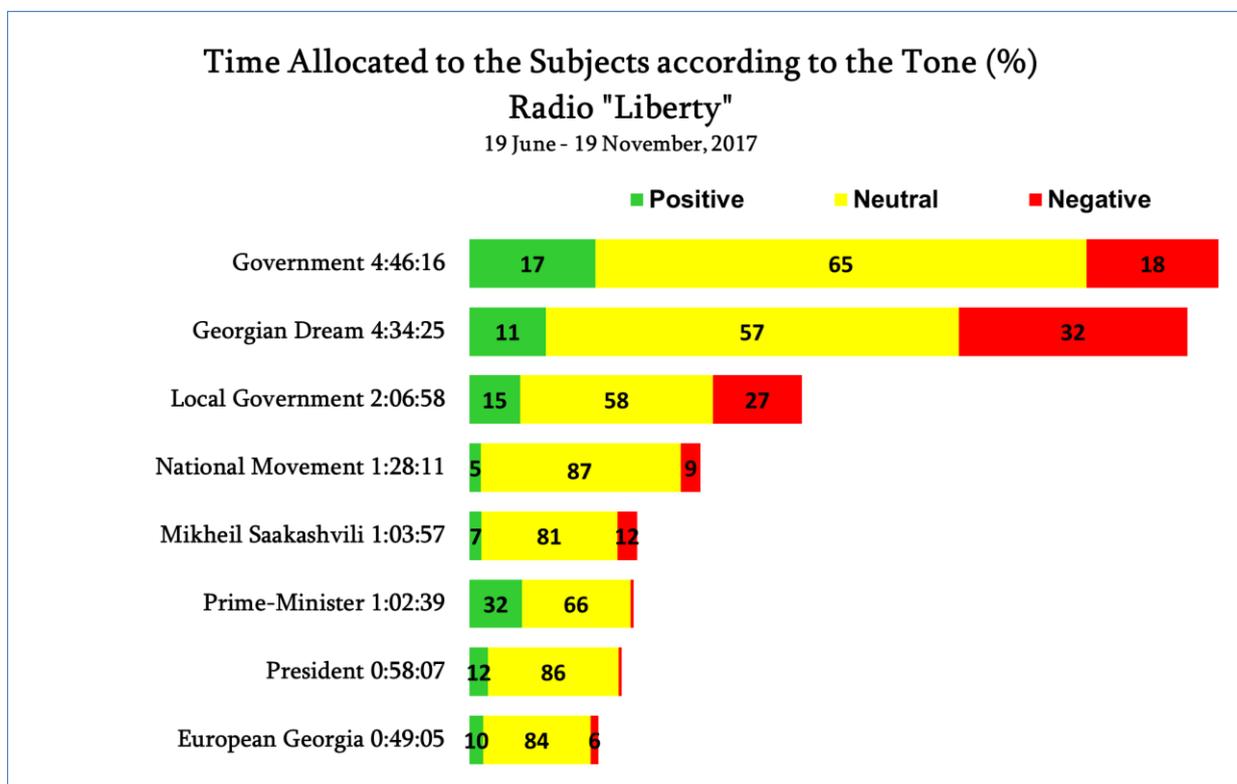
All in all, broadcaster dedicated 19 hours and 40 minutes to the entities of monitoring. Most time was given to Government (24%), and then comes Georgian Dream by 23% and local Government- by 11%. A fourth of allotted time was given for direct speech.

The broadcaster presented stories impartially and thoroughly. The journalists were outstanding for their pro-activity always in pursuit of new interesting stories or those exclusive stories

concerning social and infrastructural problems, agricultural issues, etc. which escaped the focus of other broadcasting channels. Analytical stories presented positions of each side: politicians, non-governmental sector and experts. Journalists were always eager to verify the statements made by politicians and asked critical questions.

On 21 October, the radio channel had a special broadcast covering the ongoing events at polling stations in the regions thoroughly. The journalists supplied the listeners with information from various places. In addition, statements made by observer organizations regarding violations were voiced. In particular, the topic of election subjects' interests in the registration number of voters was thoroughly covered. The radio listener had opportunity to hear opinions of all parties around the topic.

Radio broadcaster was balanced and impartial. The main topics of the day were deeply and thoroughly discussed. It's expedient if radio Liberty takes more responsibility upon itself to cover election campaigns of the parties more frequently and with high professional standards.



### *Radio Maestro*

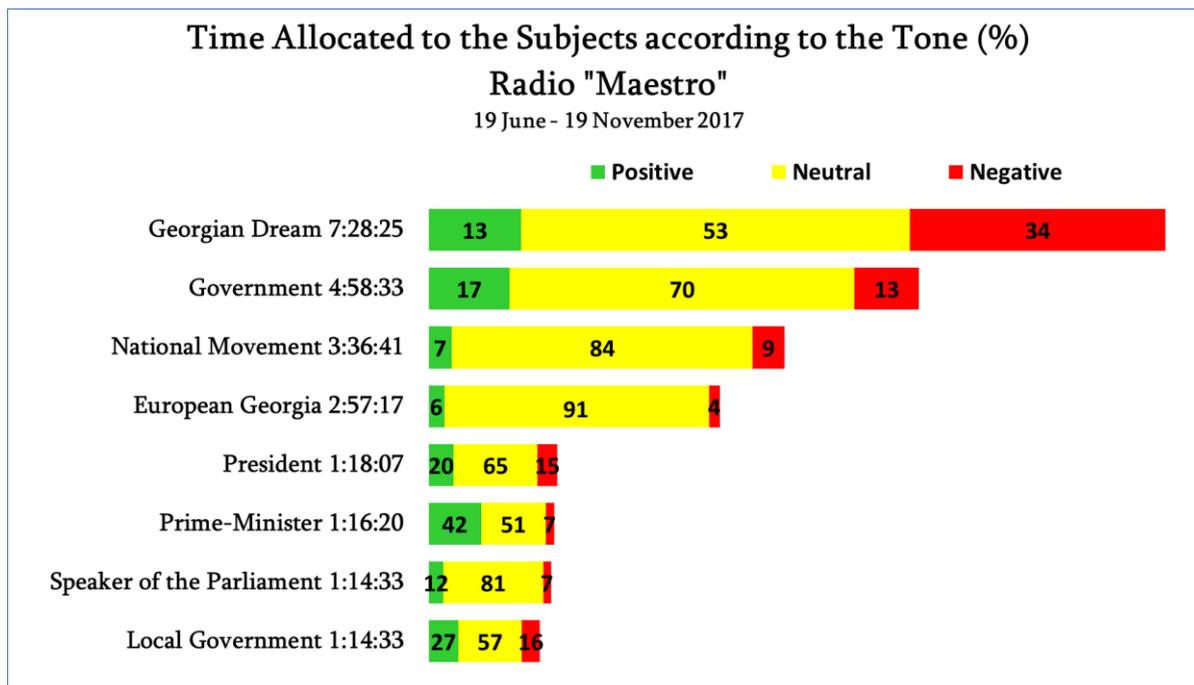
*Radio Maestro broadcasts were extensive and it covered political processes intensively, especially political party activities. In contrast with other radio broadcasters, important time (an hour and 38 seconds) was given to mayoral candidates in Tbilisi. Although listener heard their conversation, journalists were less likely to ask politicians critical questions.*

The broadcaster allocated airtime of 29 hours and 7 minutes for monitoring subjects. Most time was dedicated to Georgian Dream (26%), Government (17%), United National Movement (12%) and European Georgia (10%). In total 12 % was given to non-parliamentary opposition parties.

Events were covered impartially. However, there were individual cases of unbalanced coverage: Opponents put blames on Georgian Dream quite often, but positions of the ruling party weren't covered sometimes and even journalists didn't try to check the issue with the third party.

A chronometry of news broadcasts helped the topics to be discussed thoroughly. News broadcasts mainly encompassed the general statements of politicians, not the topics revealed by journalists. It would be desirable if other regions were accentuated except for the capital. The coverage of the ongoing events of these elections days was also focused on Tbilisi. The exception was Tianeti election events, when it turned out that an independent candidate Tamaz Mechiauri was likely to overtake Georgian Dream candidate Lela Kitesashvili by several votes. Radio Maestro extensively covered conflicts among candidates and the results of the court proceedings were balanced and reported intensively.

The journalists reported without bias. However, stories, which lack analytics on regional or minority issues, still remain a big problem.



### *Radio Voice of Abkhazia*

*Radio Voice of Abkhazia prepared short news programs with brief reports characteristic to information agencies. Broadcaster didn't express biased attitude towards any of the political forces;*

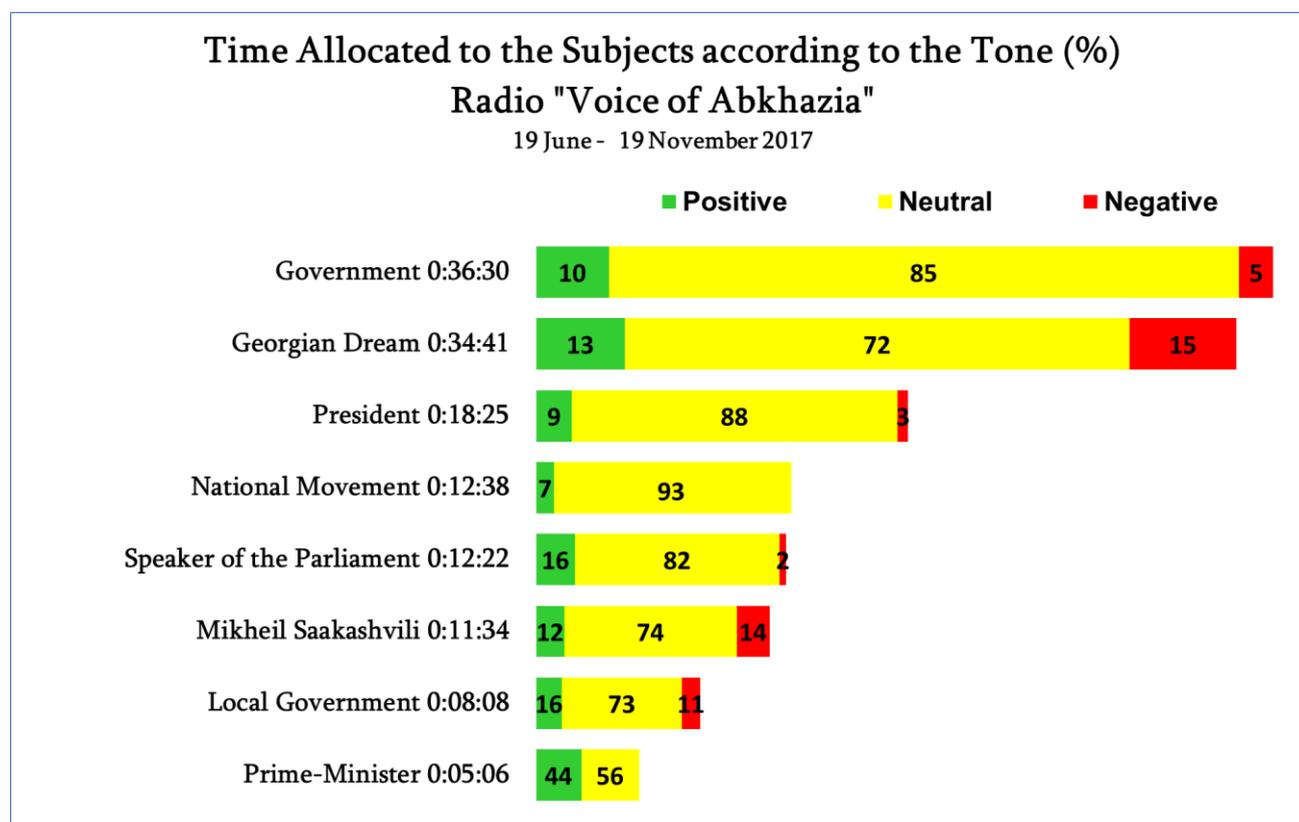
Subjects of Monitoring totally had 2 hours and 36 minutes. Most time was dedicated to Government (23%), Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (22%) and to the President of Georgia

(12 %). 100 % of coverage entails indirect speech. Text and quotes by the radio presenter was mostly neutral.

The broadcaster provided the shortage of information specifying the elections campaign. Based on broadcasts it was hard to fundamentally evaluate the electoral environment and electoral programs of candidates.

The journalists summarized the most important news of the day and provided only dry facts i.e. - information without extraneous details. They rarely tried to check the accuracy of information and in most cases, they were focused only on one source. In general, balance wasn't tilted toward any political party and evaluations of both the government and the opposition were shown as well.

The journalists worked impartially and did not even make subjective assessment. The biggest challenge for the broadcaster still remains diverse, deeply and highly balanced coverage.



**Radio Fortuna**

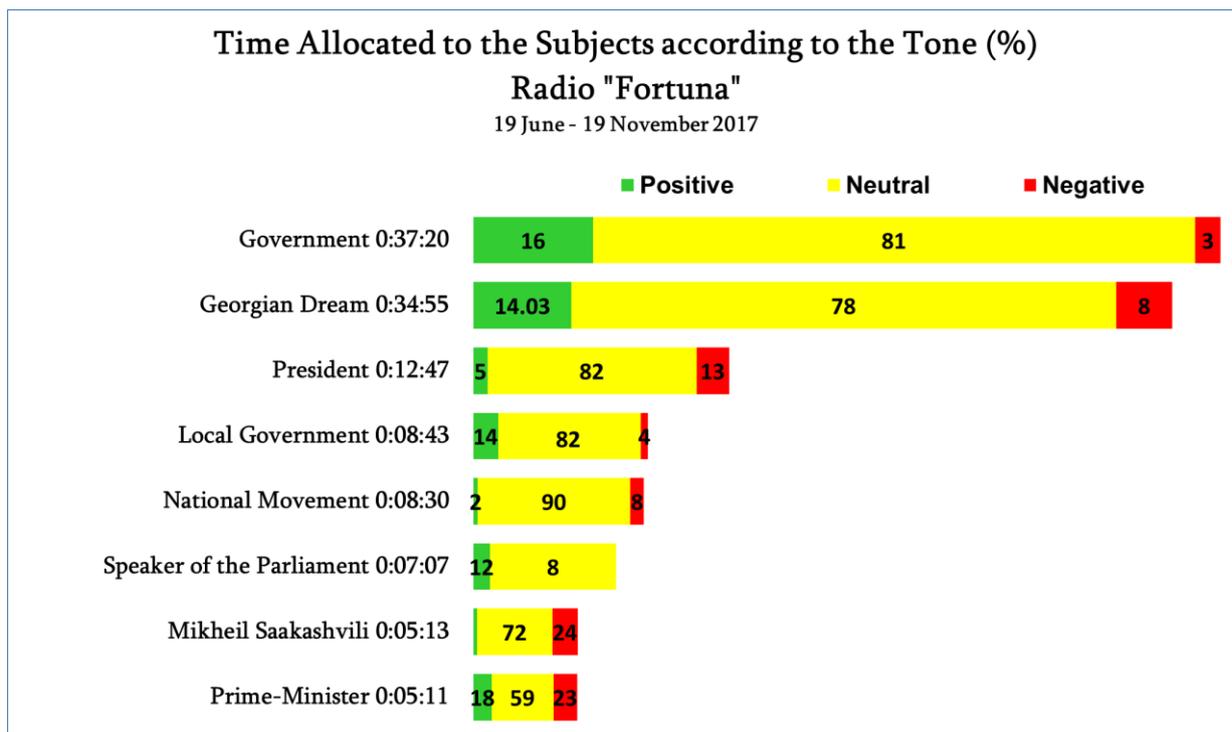
*Radio Fortuna had shot news programs and mostly news were covered briefly and superficially. Materials were prepared in the style of news agencies and this hindered provision of comprehensive information and analysis.*

Radio broadcaster allocated 2 hours and 18 minutes for the subjects of monitoring. Most of the airtime was dedicated to Government (27%), Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (25%) and to the President (9 %). The journalists quoted politicians comments by themselves. The radio

broadcaster covered pre-election campaign superficially. Allotted time for mayoral candidates of Tbilisi didn't exceed 4 minutes.

The broadcaster provided the audience little information related to election campaigns. Main political parties were briefly covered. Although the reporting was not biased towards any monitoring subject, separate news items were unbalanced, based on one source only. However, overall, the balance was not in favor of any particular political party. Comments of the Government as well as the opposition were provided.

Journalists did not show bias and did not provide their personal assessments. The main challenge for the broadcaster is more diverse, in-depth and balanced news reporting.



### **Radio Imedi**

*Broadcaster provided brief news program. Journalists simply quoted the statements of the politicians'. They didn't ask critical questions and did not try to check the statements of the respondents. Unlike the previous years, formal balance was better maintained in the stories. Despite this, the absence of pro-activity and diversity still remains the main problems.*

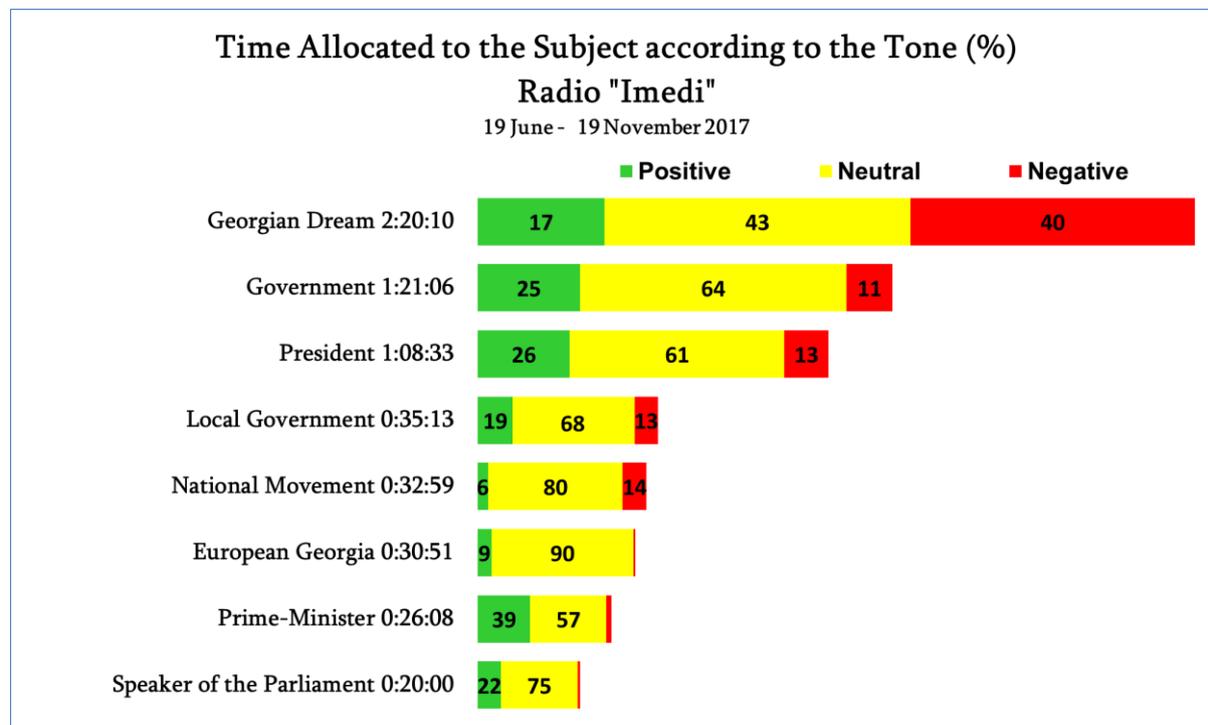
The subjects to be monitored were given 8 hours and 17 minutes. Most out of the airtime was dedicated to Georgian Dream (28%), Government (16%) and President (14 %). Monitoring subjects were given 40 % of the airtime for direct speech.

Stories by radio Imedi were not enriched with additional information, expert opinions and analysis. Journalists did not make exclusive stories and did not cover problematic issues concerning vulnerable groups of the society; the politicians' views on sensitive topics were not

covered as well. Proactivity i.e. finding topics that are hardly ever discussed at conferences would make reporting more diverse and informative.

The broadcaster did not express biased attitude towards any political parties but in several instances, it looked as if the journalists avoided criticizing the ruling party. For instance, when reporting on the death of a man during the process of detention by police, controversial statements made by law prosecutors and interior ministries were termed as misunderstanding by a journalist of Imedi . Other media outlets reported very critically on this case (30.10.2017). When media outlets prepared critical stories on depreciation of the national currency, broadcaster only offered its listeners some encouraging comments made by the representative of the ruling party. (31.10.2017).

Broadcaster covered ongoing election campaign superficially. And in this respect the news broadcast prepared on Election Day wasn't exceptional. The sharp cases of violation of journalistic standards were noticeable but there were no cases when the use of hate speech and manipulation with voice / music occurred.



***Radio Hereti (Tbilisi /Lagodekhi)***

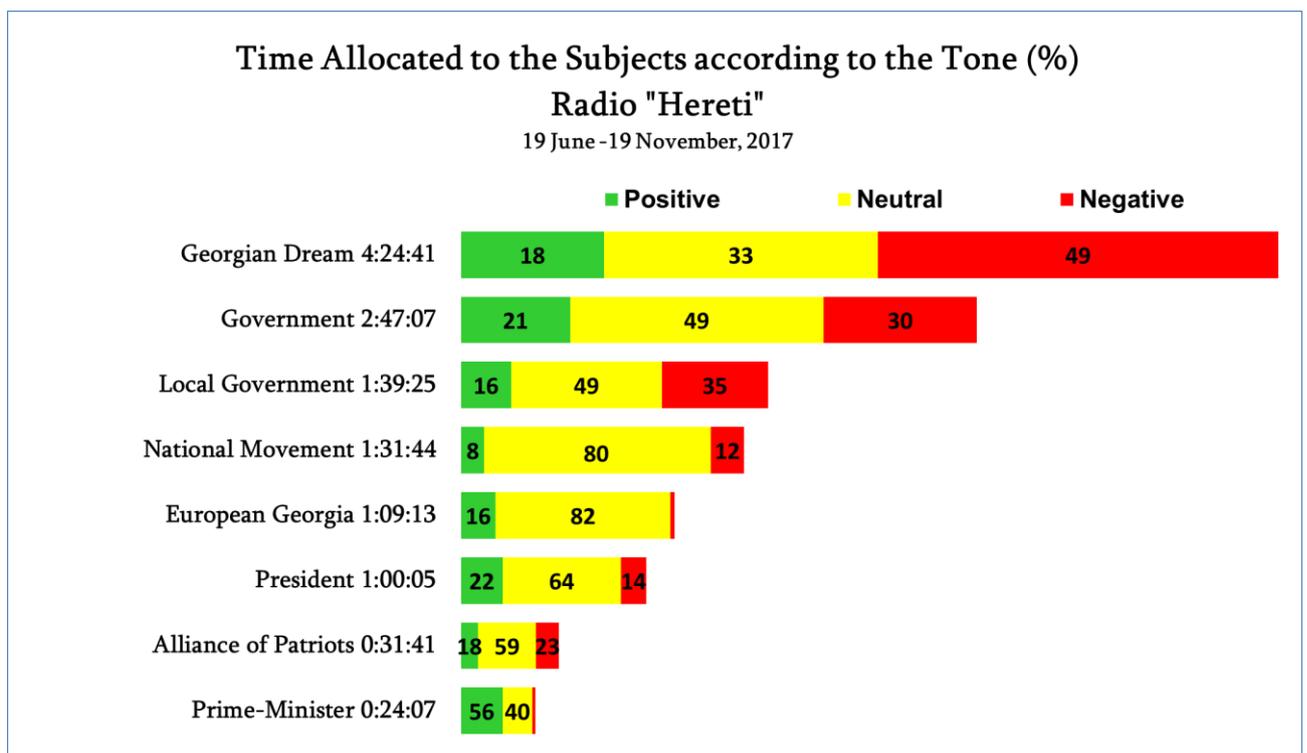
*Hereti prepared extensive broadcasts and journalists did not avoid asking critical questions. They tried to cover the events thoroughly from different perspectives. They tried to follow-up on the story in the following broadcasts. The broadcasts were diverse and entailed not only in the capital and Kakheti, but also, in other regions of Georgia. As in previous years, superficial coverage of election campaign still remains a big challenge.*

The subjects of the monitoring were given 16 hours and 12 minutes in total. 27 % out of the airtime was dedicated to Georgian Dream, 17%-Government and approximately 10-10 % were allocated for local Government and United National Movement». The ruling party was mostly

covered in more negative context (49%), rather than positive context (18%) which was conditioned by journalists' questions and critical statements of the opposition. Most stories were well balanced and the ruling party had a chance of responding to comments. 35 % of the whole airtime was taken for direct speech. All in all, 55% was meant for the direct speech.

Radio Hereti offered critical coverage of affairs not only before elections, but also after them. The journalists often cover the topics other radio channels neglect. For instance: the problems of peasants and socially vulnerable people, gender and labor rights issues, etc. This allowed the radio broadcaster to focus on specific problems and present positions of responsible entities. Journalists did not focus on politicians' statements only; the voice of citizens and assessment of specialists, civil society or opposition were often heard. Most broadcasts were balanced, but if the other party's position was not provided, journalists always explained the reasons.

The broadcaster did not cover the election campaigns thoroughly; however, they made an extensive broadcast on the Election Day. There were live broadcasts from different regions and the events developed during the day were discussed. Journalists' ethical standards were protected and there were no significant violations observed.



### *Radio Dzveli Kalaki*

*Dzveli Kalaki mainly covered of the events taking place in the region of Imereti. News broadcast was balanced showing positions of all the parties. However, Journalists were still hesitant in asking critical questions. As a result, both the government and the opposition were positively covered rather than critically.*

The subjects of monitoring were given 6 hours and 09 seconds. 19-19% out of the time was dedicated to local government and Georgian Dream- Democratic Georgia, 16 % was given to the Government. The opposition parties were given less time.

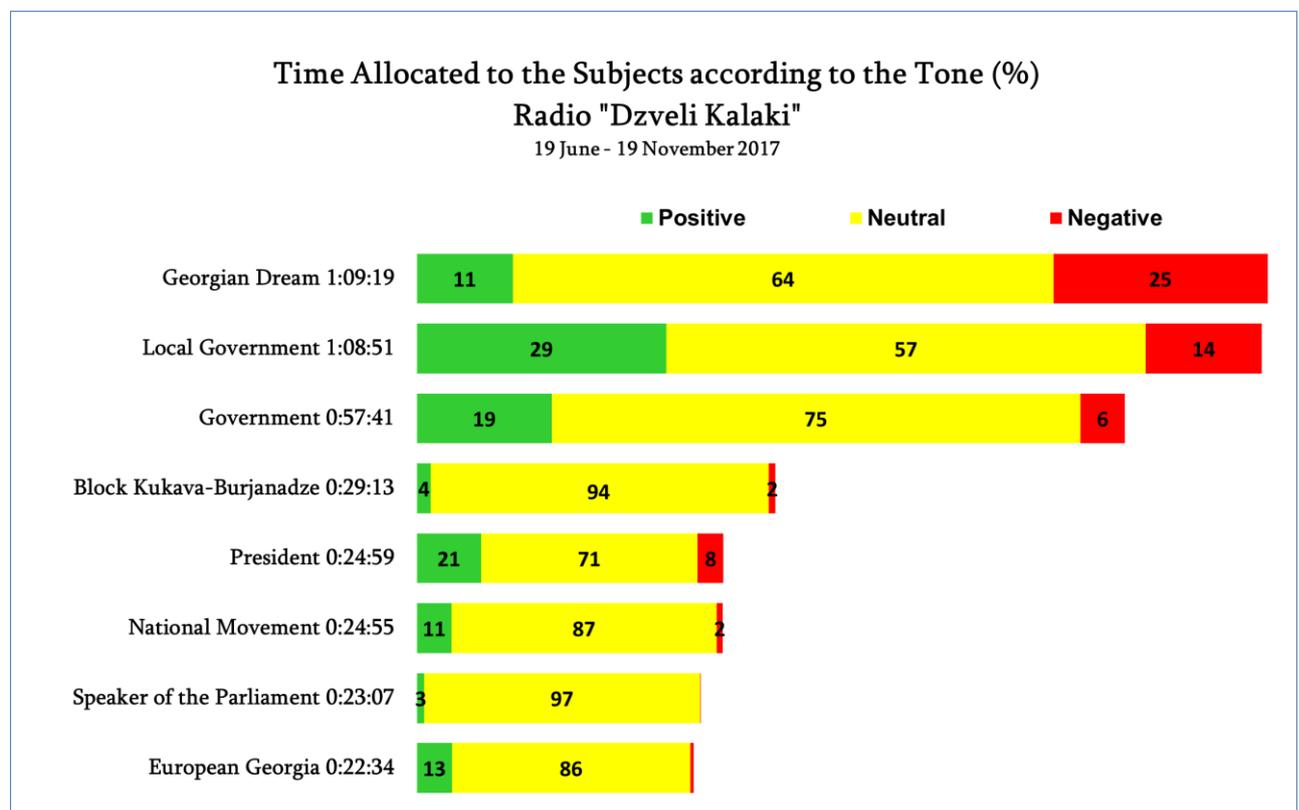
Among the opposition the first place is taken by Election block Kukava-Burjanadze with 29 minutes, followed by United National Government with 24 minutes, European Georgia- 23 minutes. The subjects of monitoring were given 28 % of the airtime for direct speech.

The journalist reported on election campaign quite often. One program was dedicated to mayoral candidates in Kutaisi. Journalists collected pre-election promises and offered their views to the audience. Such information was especially important for the population living in the regions, since other radio channels rarely talked about Mayoral candidates. The broadcaster did not prepare evening news programs on the Election Day, but it actively covered the post-election events. The time was devoted to both local and central news; vox pop was prepared on election results and expectations.

Dzveli Kalaki showed no biased attitude to any of political parties. Though, the detention of a UNM member Goga Oniani, which was extensively covered by other broadcasters was not covered.

The broadcaster reported about the problems of local population (drinking water, infrastructure, IDPs and socially vulnerable families) and covered comments made by responsible entities.

Journalists were outstanding for their pro-activity and were actively searching topics for news. The only problem lies in the fact that journalists don't cover events critically.



### *Radio Rioni (Kutaisi)*

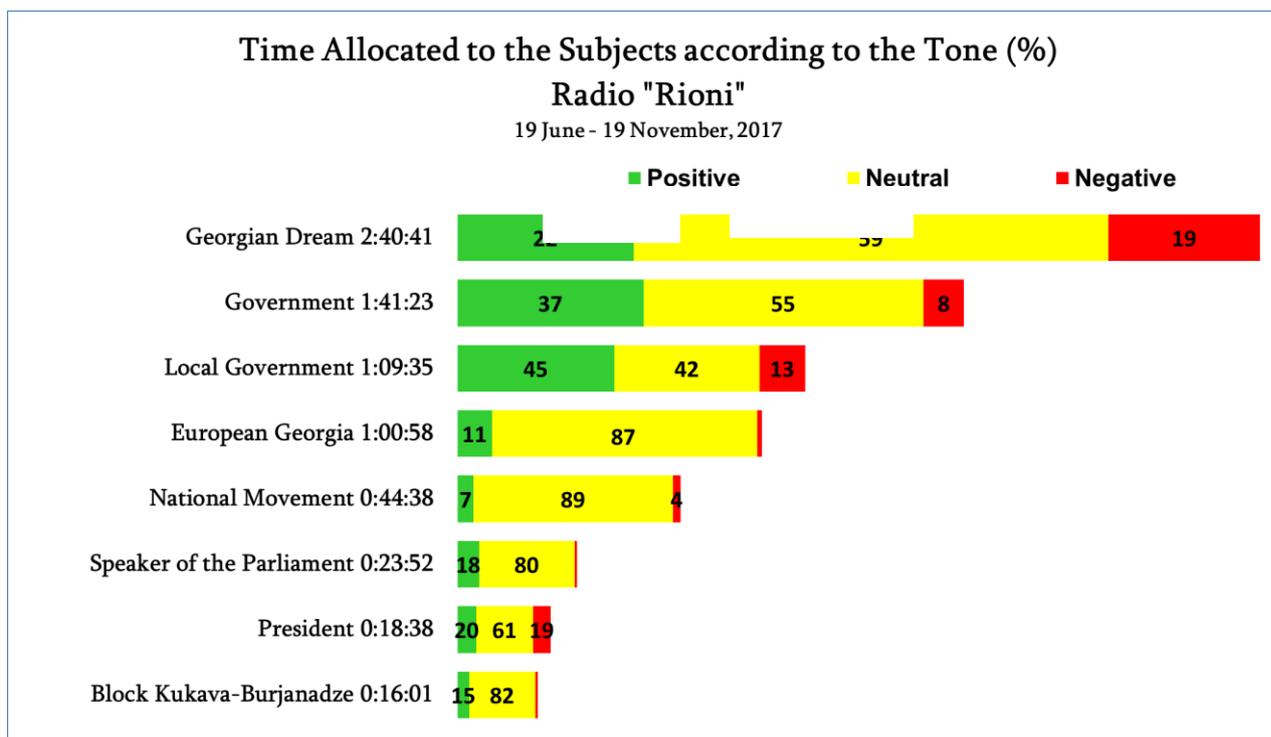
*Radio Rioni actively covered both central and local news. In the programs, a large amount of time was devoted to the coverage of the election activities of the parties. However, journalists did not pose critical questions and that led the authorities to represent themselves positively.*

The radio broadcaster devoted 9 hours and 26 minutes to the monitoring subjects. The greatest amount of time was devoted to Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (28%), 18 % - to the central government and 12% - to the local government. By comparison, the amount of time devoted to the opposition was limited: 20% of the total time was of the parliamentary opposition, and 9% was of the non-parliamentary opposition. During the coverage of the election entities, the average 40% was devoted to the direct speech.

The radio broadcaster actively covered the election - related topics and the ongoing process of the campaign. However, listeners were given scarce information regarding the programs and visions of the Candidates for Mayor. On both occasions, the channel actively covered the ongoing process of the elections not only in the region of Imereti but also in the whole country. The broadcaster gave listeners specific explanations regarding the reason why the name of the candidate for United National Movement, who had entered the second round, was still in the ballot paper, despite the fact that the party as a sign of protest refused to take part in the second round of the election.

Like the previous year the main issue of the radio broadcaster was that coverage of the events only scratched the surface. The journalists' questions were less pressing and politicians had the chance to represent themselves in a positive context. In this regard, the most problematic aspect was the coverage of the local authorities. However, reports on social problems, revealing the critical attitude towards the local authorities and the political parties are of particularly importance in a pre-election period.

Whilst broadcasting, journalism standards were maintained and there were no serious violations revealed. The main challenges are still the following: diversity of news stories, more in-depth and more balanced reports.



***Radio Atinati (Zugdidi)***

***Radio Atinati mainly covered the events unfolding in Samegrelo. The news programs were superficial and short. Journalists worked impartially. However, they reported on activities of the politicians without analysis and fact-checking.***

The broadcaster devoted 3 hours and 37 minutes to the monitoring subjects. The greatest amount of time was allocated to the following: the government (31%) and the local authorities (18%), as for the political parties, their time allocation is the following: Georgian dream - Democratic Georgia (19%) and United National Movement (11%). 18% was devoted to the direct speech.

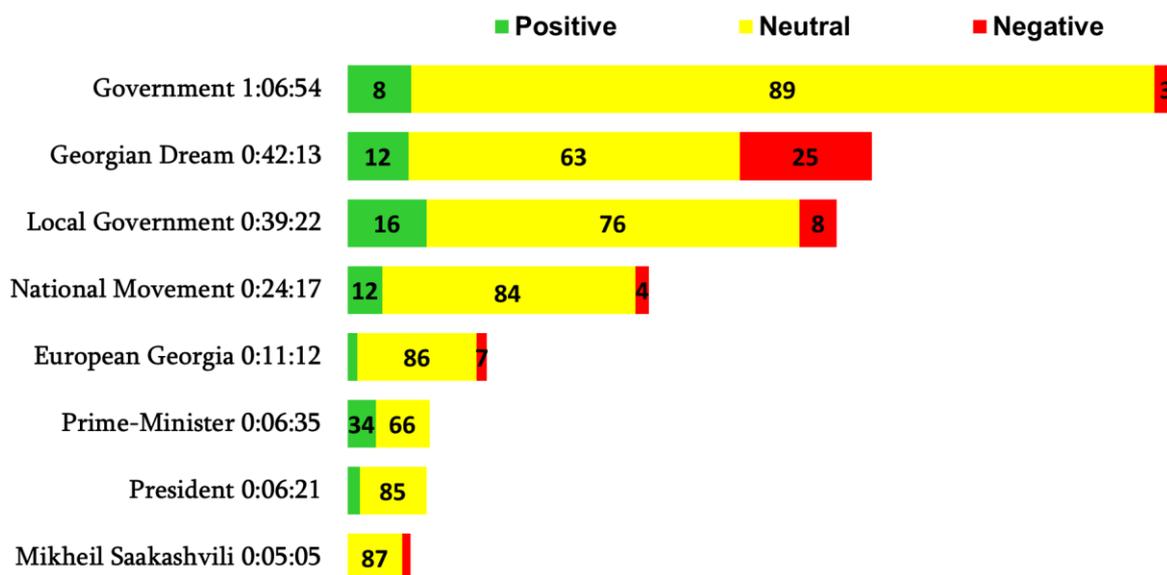
In the breaking news, the current affairs of the region and of the central government were presented superficially and briefly. The news anchor compiled and delivered the main events of the day as dry facts only. The same thing applies both to pre-election and post-election periods. Journalists directly quoted statements of the local Candidates for Mayor, though any kind of special program regarding their visions and programs was not prepared.

Whilst broadcasting, journalism standards were maintained and there were no violations revealed pertaining to the use of hate speech and the manipulation of the music/sound effect.

## Time Allocated to the Subject according to the Tone (%)

### Radio "Atinati"

19 June - 19 November, 2017



#### *Radio Marneuli*

*Radio Marneuli primarily focused on the events unfolding in Kvemo Kartli. At the end of the programs, central news was also covered, based on various other media sources. Journalists covered the events ongoing impartially and in a balanced way. The channel was distinguished from others the way it highlighted the issues concerning economics, environmental protection as well as different vulnerable groups. Despite technical faults, it has the potential to develop as an independent broadcaster of high quality.*

In total, the monitoring subjects were allocated 5 hours and 49 minutes. The local government received most of the coverage time (30%), followed by Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (22%) and the government (18%). The average 30% was devoted to the direct speech.

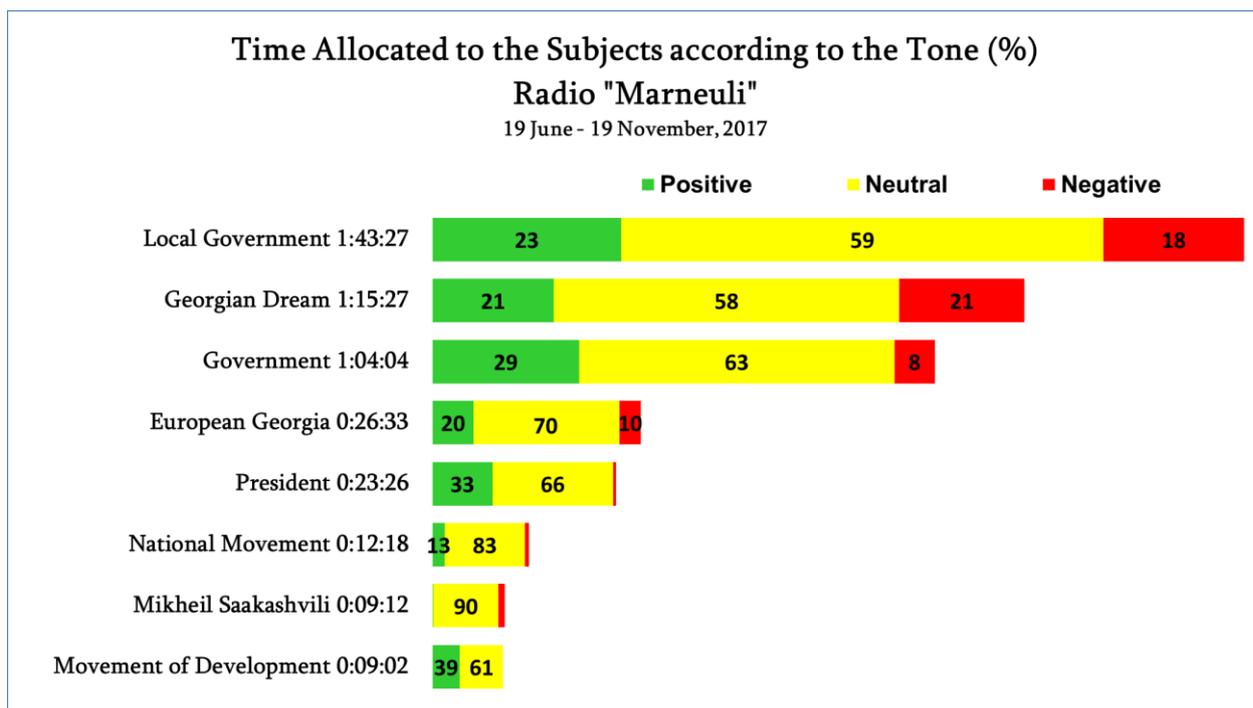
Radio Marneuli critically covered the events ongoing in Kvemo Kartli. The journalists followed up on the stories, which had been covered once before. This is one of the indicators of a responsible media. At the beginning of the monitoring technical faults were most prevalent, though gradually these technical faults were significantly reduced.

Journalists intensively covered the election campaign. Unlike most of other radio broadcasters, the coverage was not limited only to the meetings of the candidates with the population and tried to report on the programs of the parties taking part in the election.

Journalists also prepared exclusive reports. They touched upon the themes such as early marriage, women's involvement in politics, rights of minorities. Sometimes the problems that were spotted by them became news of the nationwide importance, whereas they might have remained the issue linked to the region only. For example, the question, posed by a local journalist, regarding the absence of women at the meeting of the newly elected Mayor for Marneuli with the

population, turned out to be one of the top news for the whole week in the media. It is noteworthy that the radio broadcaster concerned appeared to be the most sensitive broadcaster regarding gender-related issues, and that was given the coverage several times in the context of elections and beyond the scope of elections as well.

Marneuli has the potential to develop as an independent broadcaster of high quality. It is apparent that the journalists tended to cover events impartially and fairly. These attributes are one of the prerequisites for a high-quality radio broadcaster. However, the radio broadcaster has a lot of work ahead to fully eliminate the technical problems and make the news release much more in-depth.



***Radio Ajara (Batumi, Public Broadcaster of Ajara)***

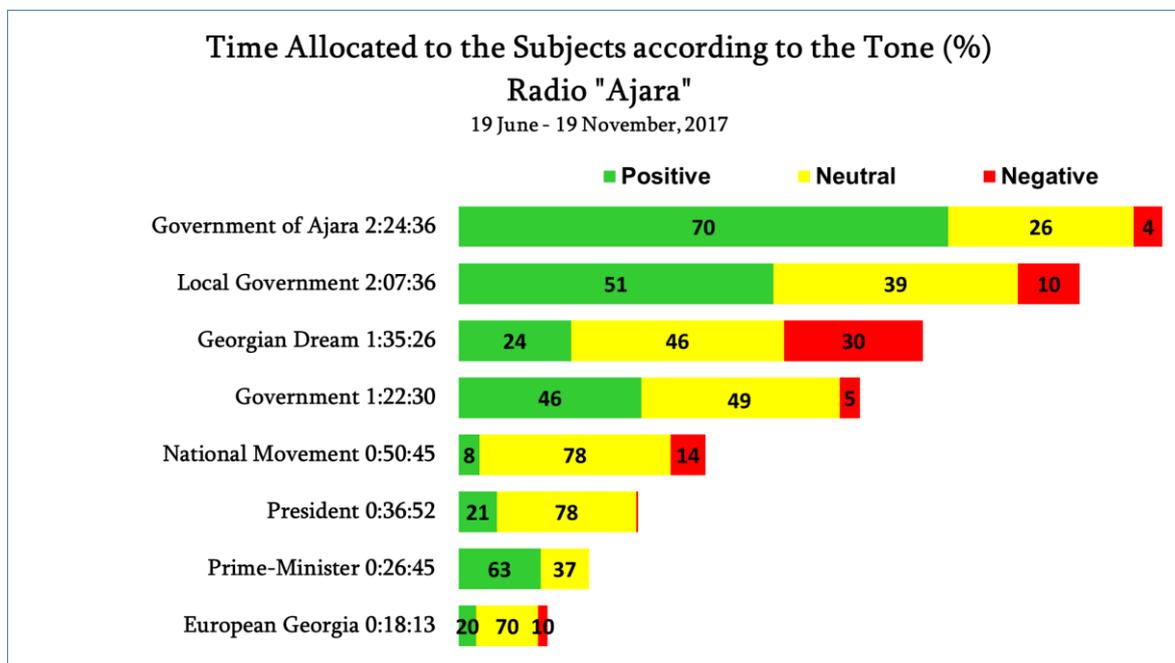
***Radio Ajara prepared extensive news coverage, though reports were dry and superficial. The activities of the authorities were given a large amount of the coverage time. However, the journalists did not pose critical questions and the ruling party was covered in a positive context.***

The monitoring subjects were allocated 10 hours and 26 minutes. 72% of this reporting time was dedicated to the coverage of the government and the ruling party, while the opposition was allocated a short period of coverage time: United National Movement - 8%, European Georgia - 3%, Alliance of Patriots – 1%. The non-parliamentary opposition parties were also beyond the focus of attention and they were hardly given any coverage time.

The Ajara government (70%) and local self-governments (51%) were particularly positively covered by the radio broadcaster discussed. This tendency was revealed by the findings of last year’s monitoring. However, this is one of the most pressing issues facing the public broadcasting, and it has become more apparent this year.

The extensive time for news coverage for the radio broadcaster created the opportunity that the events were reported from different perspectives and less questions were left unanswered. However, journalists avoided posing critical questions to the representatives of the authorities, quite often, the news reports were based upon only the statements of the ruling party and the critical evaluations of the opposition were rarely heard on-air. The largest amount of time of coverage was devoted to the state projects successfully implemented. The issues, which seemed to be the reason for criticizing authorities by other media outlets, as a tendency, were toned down on Ajara, sometimes even to the point that highlighted the effective working of the authorities. (e.g., fighting against Asian Beetles, the assignment of the state property to the company owned by Bidzina Ivanishvili and so forth.) In addition, the introduction of respondents still remained quite an issue, owing to that, on some occasions it was unclear who was talking on-air.

There was no violation revealed with respect to the use of hate speech and the manipulation of the music/sound effect. But considering the issues mentioned above, unbiased information was not delivered to listeners.



### Recommendations

The data collected in the last years shows us that radio broadcasters have experienced positive changes. In particular, in programs opposing views were aired and news releases were becoming more and more balanced. Besides, most radio broadcasters did not reveal a biased attitude towards any of the political parties, journalists did not make personal assessments and the cases of the manipulation of the voice and that of the music and sound effect were not observed either. All these factors are extremely important for the election campaign to be covered, though they are not enough to maintain high professional standards. The radio channels face the following significant challenges, and thus, they should:

- Be pro-active and cover the election-related topics, that are not voiced at press conferences by politicians themselves;
- Ask critical, evidence-based questions;
- Devote more time to the election programs and discussion of the visions of candidates;
- Pay more attention to the ongoing processes in the regions;
- Pay more time to the social issues and the problems of minorities and present positions of political actors on these topics;
- The introduction of respondents remains one of the key issues for most of the radio channels; it often remains unclear for the listeners, who is speaking.

## Online Media Monitoring



The Civic Development Institute (CDI) carried out the monitoring of online media within the frameworks of the EU-UNDP funded project Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2017 Local Government Elections in Georgia. The monitoring started on 19 June 2017 and was completed on 19 November 2017.

The following online media outlets were monitored: Ajaraps.com, ambebi.ge, batumelebi.ge, chemikharagauli.com, for.ge, inforustavi.ge, interpressnews.ge, knews.ge, kutaisipost.ge, livepress.ge, medianews.ge, netgazeti.ge, news.ge on.ge, presa.ge, qartli.ge, reginfo.ge, sknews.ge, tabula.ge, telegraph.ge.

### Monitoring Methodology

Monitoring consisted of quantitative and qualitative components. During the quantitative research, major attention was paid to coverage of specific election subjects in selected media and what was the tone used towards this subject. During the qualitative research, major attention was paid to how media complies with journalistic norms of ethics, such as: reporting verified and confirmed information, using appropriate language, covering topics with a reasonable balance and diversity of sources, refraining from visual, audio, or other manipulations. Monitors also paid attention to the degree at which conclusions of journalists were reinforced by facts. Monitoring was carried out for all the articles for each website throughout the monitoring process.

### Key Findings

- No positive or negative attitude towards any political party was observed on the monitored websites.
- Majority of websites prepared articles without major violations of the journalistic standards and norms of ethics.
- Journalists did not use abusive and discriminative language in most cases.
- One of the major challenges of online media is superficial coverage of topics and lack of critical analysis;
- Critical analysis of social and economic problems was more characteristic for regional publications;
- In majority of cases, election programs of mayoral candidates were published without analysis;
- Programs of political parties and their analysis was rarely provided;
- Majority of selected websites covered election processes impartially and intensively. The same applies to election results and procedures for the second round of voting.

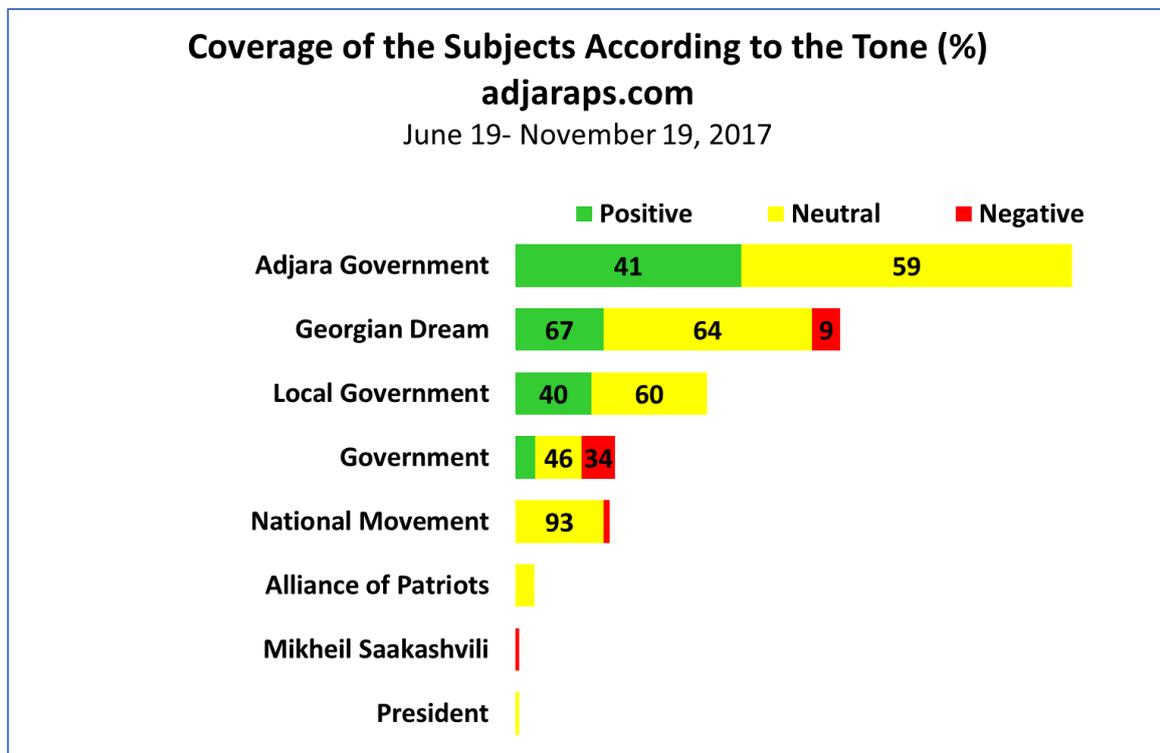
- Articles prepared within commercial programs are still not appropriately separated from the editorial content. Some websites do not put appropriate marks on such material. In other cases, indication is not clear enough.

### Ajaraps.com

*During the monitoring period, major violation of journalistic standards and norms of ethics were not observed, however, the website intensively covered activities of the ruling party.*

Ajaraps.com most actively covered activities of the Government of Ajara (43%) and Georgian Dream (25%). Positive tone prevailed towards both subjects. High percentage of negative tone was observed towards Government (34%). This can be attributed to the publication of long interview with engineer-hydrologist, who criticized the government regarding coastline protection activities (*“Catastrophe of Ajara Coastline and Wasted Borrowed Millions...” September 5th*). The website did not cover pre-election activities of Batumi mayoral candidates.

During the monitoring period, Ajarapas.com published some materials prepared by the press department of the Georgian Dream (for example, *Georgian Dream mayoral candidate holds meeting at Shuakhevi*”, September 19). It was indicated that the material was not editorial content; however, it was not clear whether these articles were prepared in the scope of commercial agreement. If the service is of a commercial nature, then the website should make it clear to the readers.

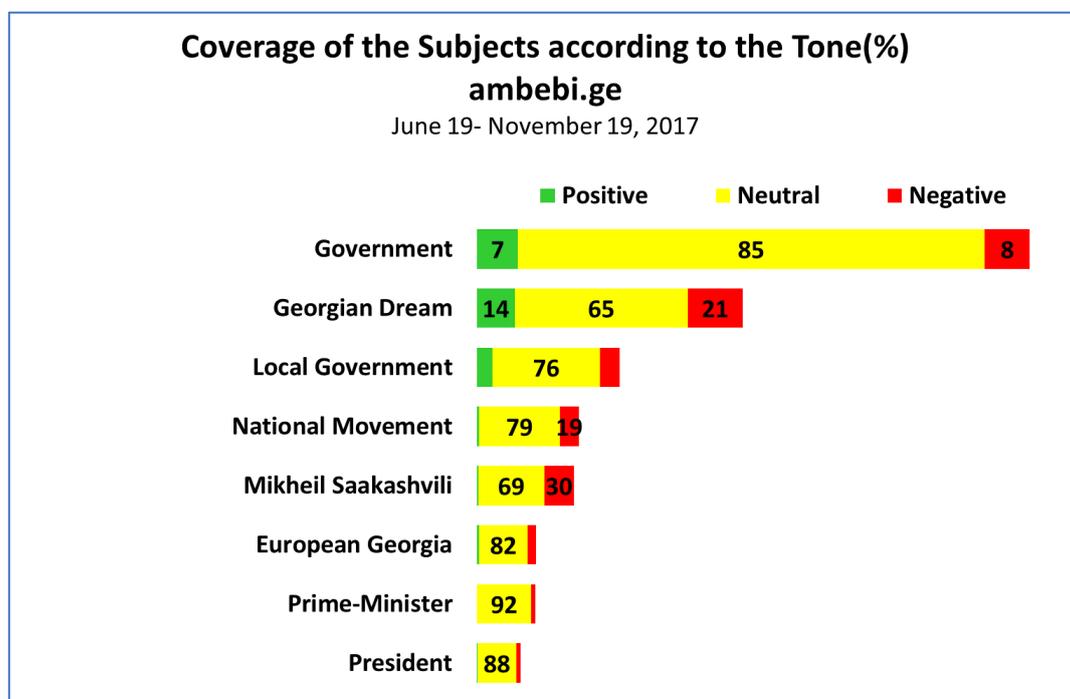


ambebi.ge

*During the monitoring period, no positive or negative attitude towards any political power was observed. Journalistic standards and norms of ethics were not violated.*

Ambebi.ge most actively covered Government (36%) and Georgian Dream (18%) activities. High percentage of negative tone was observed in coverage of former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (45%) and former President Mikheil Saakashvili (30%). High percentage of positive tone was not observed towards any subject. No high percentage of positive or negative tone was detected during coverage of Tbilisi mayoral candidates.

It shall be highlighted that major improvements have been observed on ambebi.ge with the regard to protection of journalistic standards and norms of ethics, as well as impartial coverage of political processes. During the monitoring period of 2017, ambebi.ge has impartially covered ongoing processes in the country.

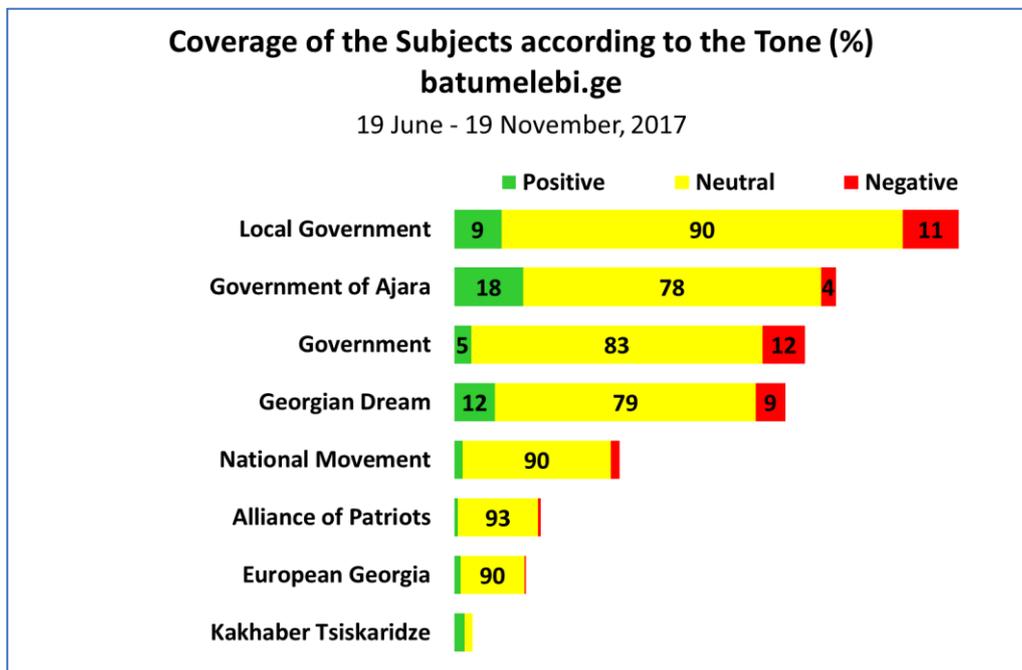


batumelebi.ge

*During the monitoring period, no positive or negative attitude towards any political power has been observed. Website protected journalistic standards and norms of ethics. Interviews with Batumi mayoral candidates, which were elaborated in impartial and professional manner were offered to the readers.*

No high percentage of positive or negative tone has been observed on batumelebi.ge towards any subject. The website covered all pre-election activities of Batumi mayoral candidates impartially. The election process and election results were also covered impartially, as well as intensively.

Based on the monitoring results, we can conclude that batumelebi.ge has impartially covered ongoing political processes. It shall be highlighted that the website properly distinguishes articles prepared in the scope of commercial agreements from editorial materials.

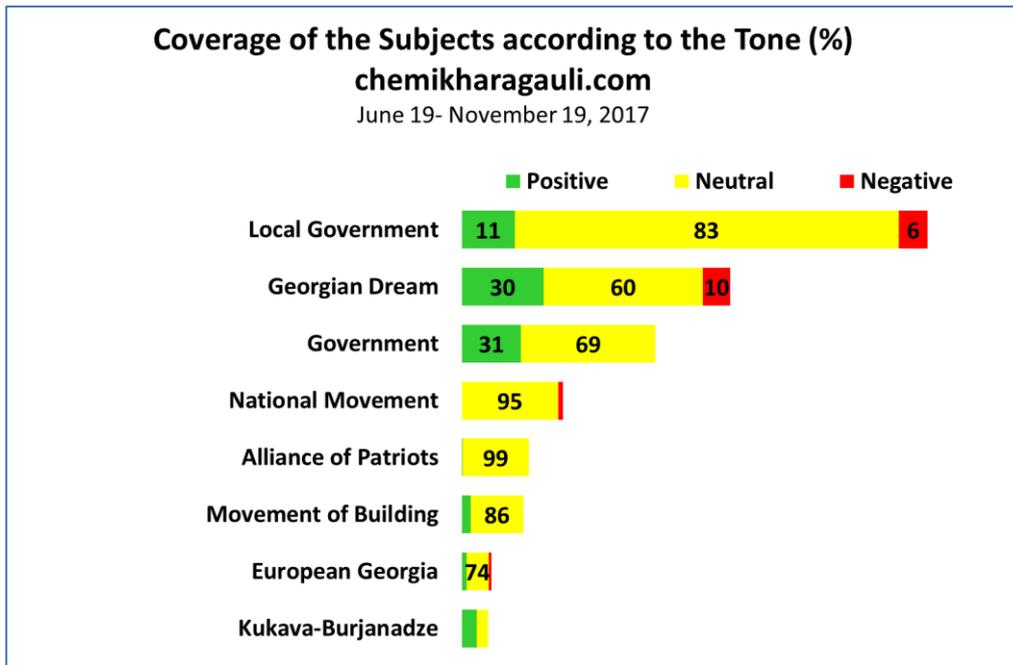


#### **chemikharagauli.com**

*During the monitoring period, no positive or negative attitude towards any political power has been observed. However, positive tone towards the ruling party and the government prevailed. No major violations of journalistic standards and norms of ethics have been observed.*

Chemikharagauli.com most actively covered activities of Local Government (37%), Georgian Dream (21%) and Government (15%). The positive tone prevailed in coverage of block “Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Kakha Kukava-Democratic Movement-Free Georgia” (57%), Government (31%) and Georgian Dream (30%). No cases of high percentage of negative tone in coverage of the monitoring objects have been observed.

Chemikharagauli.com actively covered ongoing political processes of the region. During the coverage, no positive or negative attitude has been observed towards the political parties. Coverage of mayoral candidates’ pre-election activities were impartial, as well as the coverage of election results.



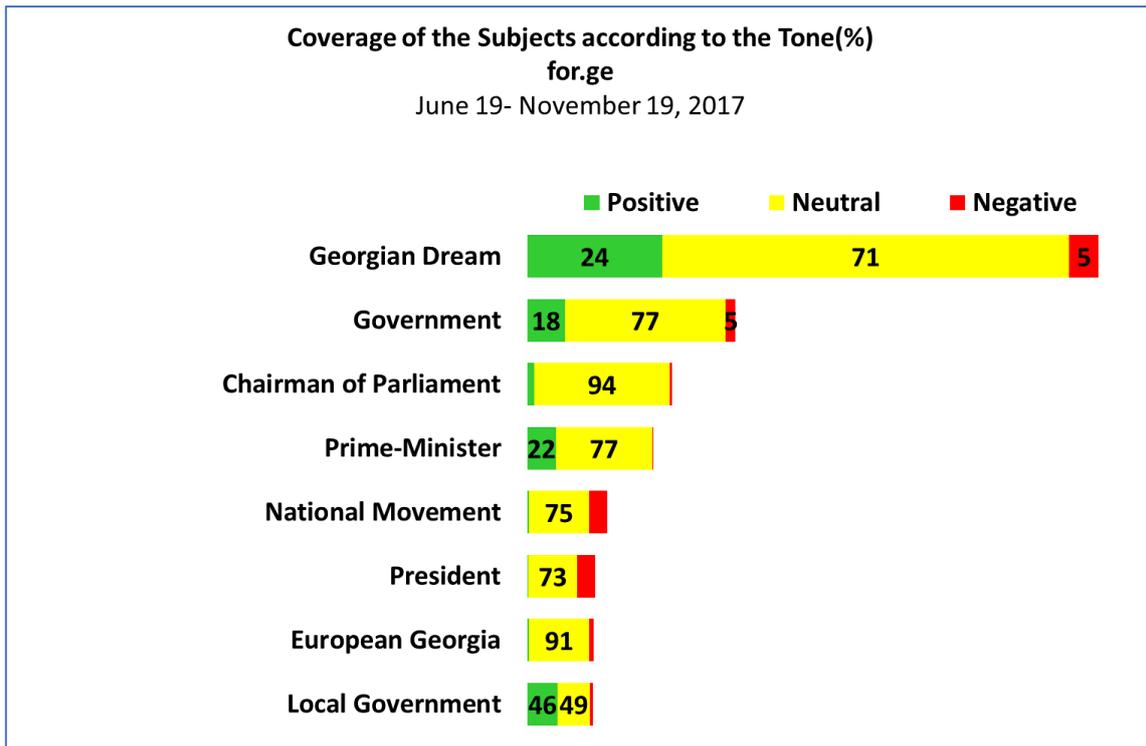
for.ge

*During the monitoring period, positive attitude towards the government and Tbilisi mayoral candidate Kakha Kaladze was observed. Commercial articles were published on the website without appropriate indicators.*

For.ge most actively covered Georgian Dream (38%) and government (14%) activities. In coverage of above mentioned subjects positive tone prevailed. High percentage of negative tone has been observed in coverage of former President Mikheil Saakashvili (32%), President of Georgia (26%) and United National Movement (26%). Compared to other mayoral candidates, four times more coverage was allocated to Kakha Kaladze. Relatively high percentage of positive tone (59%) has been observed towards Kaladze.

For.ge published commercial materials without any proper indications. For example, on September 5<sup>th</sup>, six websites published an article on meeting of Kakha Kaladze and the Ambassador of the Great Britain. From these six websites, only few indicated the material was commercial. Some did not have proper indications, including for.ge. In case the material is not prepared within commercial agreement and is distributed by the party press office, the website should indicate the source of the material clearly, declaring that it is not an editorial content.

Articles published on interpressnews.ge were often seen on for.ge and the source of information was not indicated. It shall be highlighted that there were large number of cases when such articles were published on interpressnews.ge with the indication of a commercial, while the same articles were not indicated as commercials on for.ge.

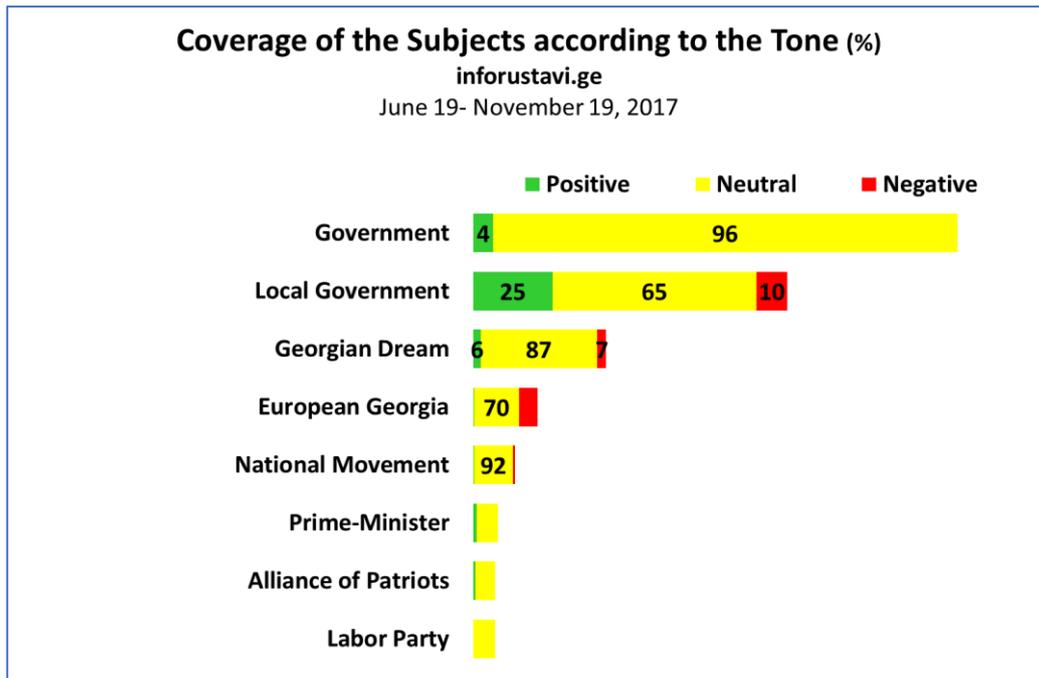


inforustavi.ge

*During the monitoring period, no major positive or negative attitudes have been observed in coverage of any political power. No major violations of journalistic standards and norms of ethics have been observed.*

Inforustavi.ge most actively covered Government (40%) and Local Government (26%) activities. High percentage of negative tone (28%) was observed in coverage of European Georgia. Negative tone prevailed in coverage of this political party. This negativity can be attributed to publication of an interview with Rustavi City Hall representative, where the City Hall answers the allegations from the mayoral candidate of European Georgia (“Nino Imedashvili is deceiving”, October 3<sup>rd</sup>). No positive or negative attitude has been observed in coverage of other mayoral candidates.

On inforustavi.ge, commercial articles are separated from other materials, however not in the proper manner. Circled letter R is attached to this kind of articles. The website should put clearer indication on commercial material.



interpessnews.ge

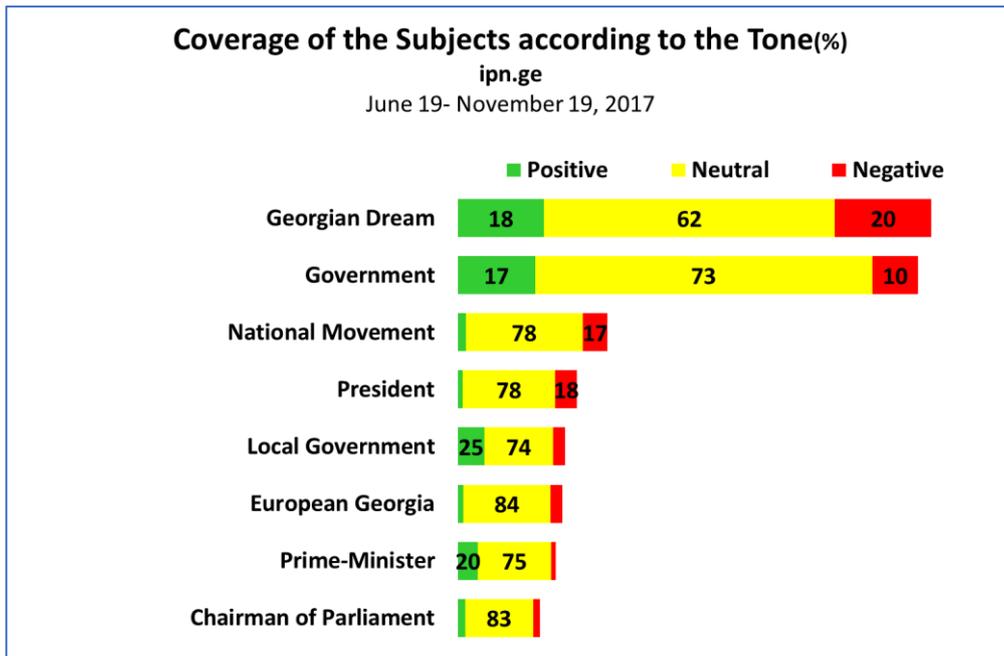
*During the monitoring period, no major positive or negative attitudes have been observed in coverage of any political power. No major violations of journalistic standards and norms of ethics have been observed. However, the articles prepared in the scope of commercial agreements were not properly separated from other material.*

Interpessnews.ge most actively covered activities of the Georgian Dream (25%) and Government (24%). High percentage of negative tone has been observed in coverage of former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (71%), former President Mikheil Saakashvili (22%), President of Georgia (18%) and United National Movement (17%). Noteworthy degree of the positive was observed in coverage of any subject.

Among Tbilisi mayoral candidates, Kakha Kaladze was covered most intensively (57%). High percentage of positive or negative tone has not been observed in coverage of any candidate. The website had very covered election process actively and impartially, as well as election results and procedures related to the second round of voting.

On Interpessnews.ge, commercial materials have special indicators, which are not easy to understand for readers (“NS” is written on such materials and once the cursor is pointed on this mark the words “News from Subscriber” appear).

The website should use clearer indications.



knews.ge

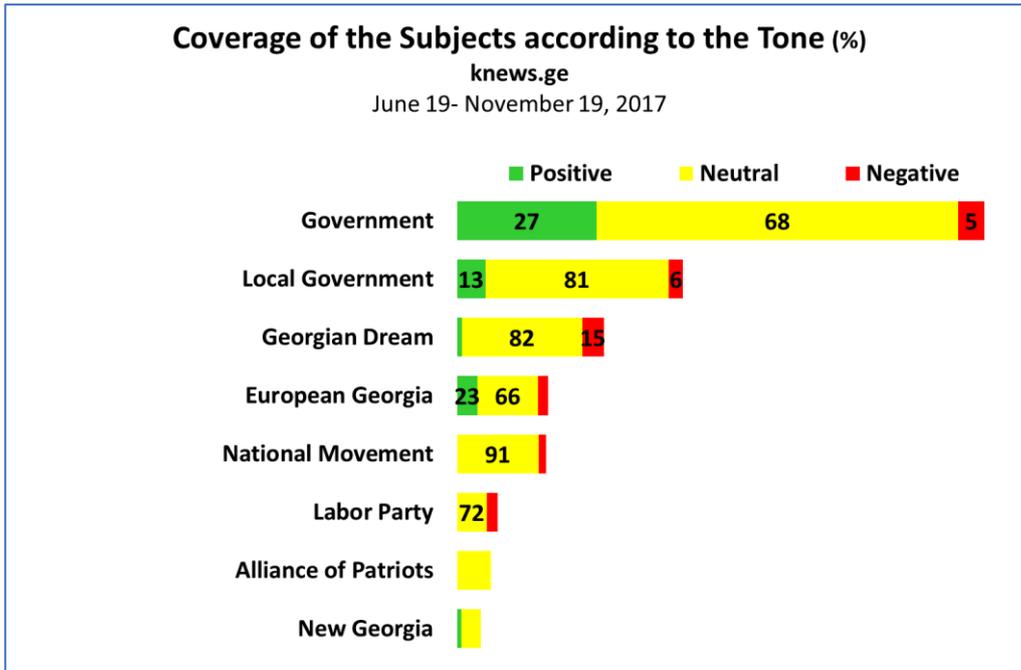
*During the monitoring period, no major positive or negative attitudes have been observed in coverage of any political power. However, positive tone towards the government prevailed. No major violations of journalistic standards and norms of norms of ethics have been observed.*

Knews.ge most actively covered activities of the Government (41%), Local Government (27%) and European Georgia (23%). Noteworthy degree of positive tone was not observed in coverage of any subject.

Knews.ge did not cover elections related topics intensively. However, it shall be highlighted that we came across a very interesting article regarding female engagement in elections (*“Why are women passive during the elections”, August 18<sup>th</sup>*).

Knews.ge actively covered regional affairs. In some cases, issues were discussed in depth and opinions of government representatives as well as local population was provided (for example, *“Telavi life since elections 2014 till today”, June 28*).

On the elections day, knews.ge actively and impartially covered voting process, including the detected violations and voter turnout.



**kutaisipost.ge**

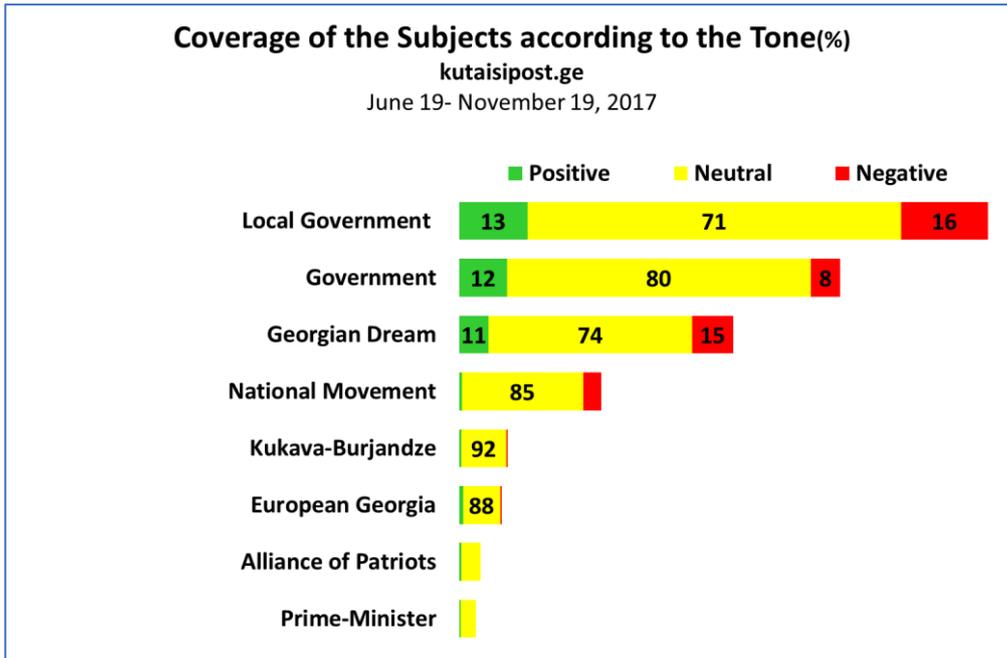
*During the monitoring period, no major positive or negative attitudes have been observed in coverage of any political power. Website protected journalistic standards and norms of ethics. It shall be noted that articles under the commercial agreement were properly dissociated from other materials.*

Kutaisipost.ge most actively covered activities of the Local Government (34%), Government (24%) and Georgian Dream (17%). Noteworthy degree of positive tone has not been observed in coverage of any subject.

Kutaisipost.ge offered series of video programs titled “Tavisupali Tribuna”, where interviews with Kutaisi mayoral candidates, as well as representatives of other parties were presented. These programs were prepared impartially and no positive or negative attitude towards any candidate has been observed.

On Kutaisipost.ge, commercial articles were properly dissociated from other materials. For example, on September 5<sup>th</sup>, six websites published identical text about the meeting of Kakha Kaladze with the British Ambassador. Some websites did not have any indications on the material, while some including kutaisipost.ge put proper indications.

Based on the monitoring results, we can conclude that kutaisipost.ge covered 2017 elections intensively and impartially. No violations of journalistic standards and norms of ethics have been observed on the website.



livepress.ge

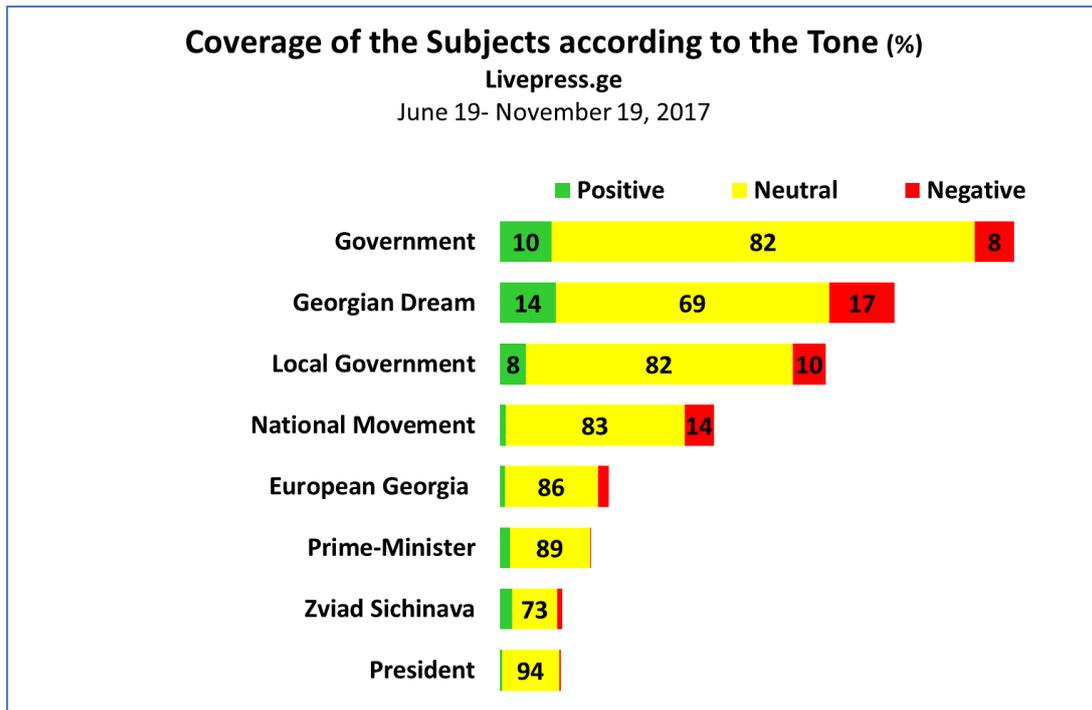
*During the monitoring period, no major positive or negative attitudes have been observed in coverage of any political power. It shall be noted that website articles under the commercial agreement was properly dissociated from other materials.*

Livepress.ge most actively covered activities of the government (27%), Georgian Dream (21%) and Local Government (17%). Noteworthy degree of positive tone was not observed in coverage of any subject.

Livepress.ge pre-election activities of Zugdidi mayoral candidates impartially. Election results were actively and impartially covered as well.

On Livepress.ge, commercial articles were properly dissociated from other materials. For example, on September 5<sup>th</sup>, six websites published identical text about the meeting of Kakha Kaladze with the British Ambassador. Some websites did not have any commercial indications on this material, while some including livepress.ge put proper indications.

Based on the monitoring results, we can conclude that livepress.ge has impartially covered ongoing political processes. The articles were prepared in compliance with journalistic standards and norms of ethics.



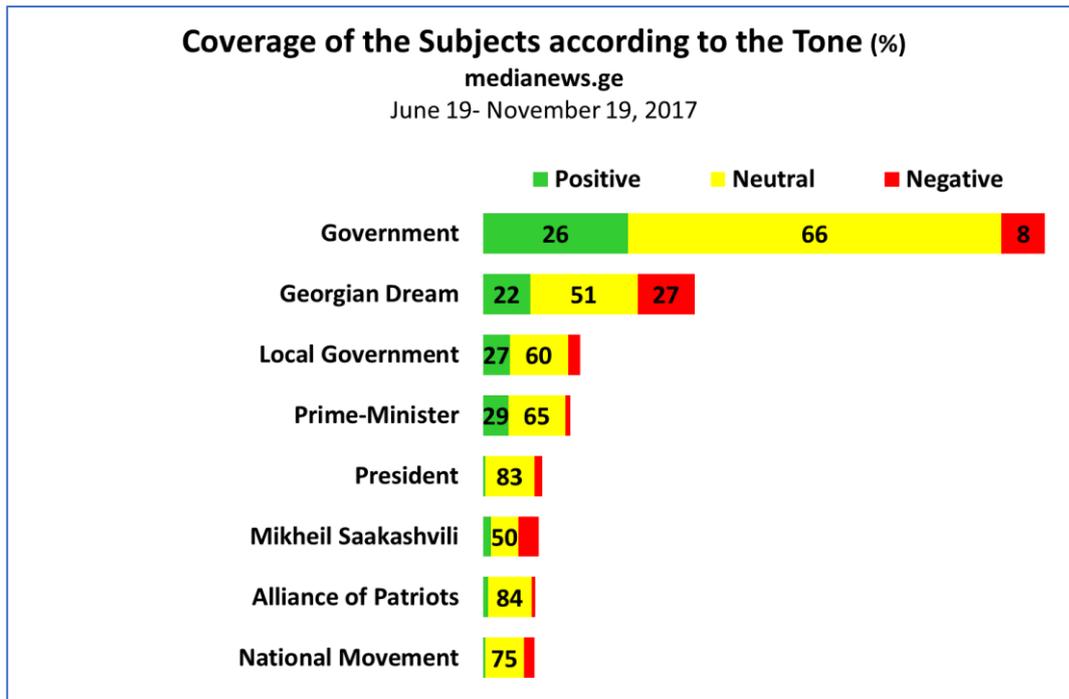
medianews.ge

*About 40 percent of the articles posted on medianews.ge during the monitoring period were about Government activities. The articles prepared within the commercial agreement on the website were not separated from the editorial materials.*

Medianews.ge most actively covered the activities of the Government (40%) and Georgian Dream (15%). The highest percentage of positive tone was revealed during the coverage of the activities of Government of Ajara (39%), Prime Minister (29%) and Local Government (27%). The highest rates of negative tone were revealed towards former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (68%) and Ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (36%). Among Tbilisi Mayoral candidates, Kakha Kaladze was covered most intensively (49%). Kakha Kaladze had the highest percentage of positive tone (49%) among Tbilisi Mayoral candidates.

For example, on September 5<sup>th</sup>, six websites published an article on meeting of Kakha Kaladze and the Ambassador of the Great Britain. From these six websites, only few indicated that the material was commercial. Some did not have proper indications, including medianews.ge. In case the material is not prepared within commercial agreement and is distributed by the party press office, the website should indicate the source of the material clearly, declaring that it is not an editorial content.

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that on medianews.ge there is a serious problem regarding separation of non-editorial content from the original material.



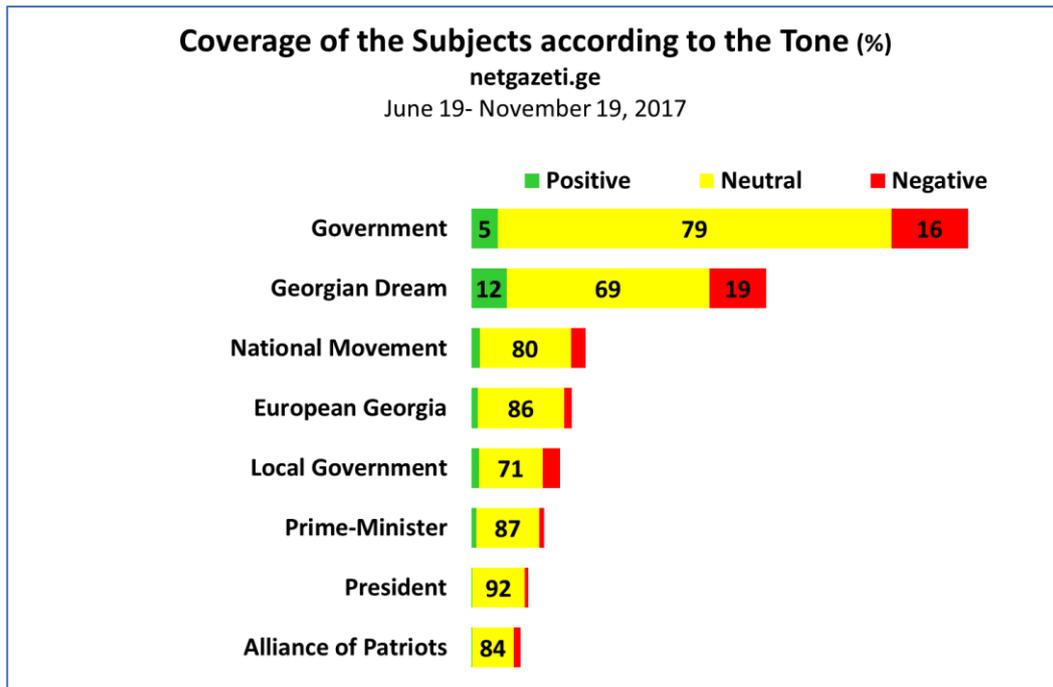
**netgazeti.ge**

*During the monitoring period netgazeti.ge revealed no positive or negative attitude towards any political force. Journalism standards and norms of ethics were protected on the website. Netgazeti.ge was distinguished with reporting.*

Netgazeti.ge most actively covered the activities of the Government (30%) and Georgian Dream (18%). Exceptionally high percentage of positive or negative tone was not revealed in terms of coverage of any of the monitoring entities.

The independent candidate Aleksandre Elisashvili was most actively covered (21%) among Tbilisi Mayoral Candidates. There was no positive or negative attitude revealed towards any candidate during the coverage of Tbilisi mayoral candidates. The website actively and impartially covered the process of election, as well as elections results and procedures for the second round of voting.

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that netgazeti.ge covered 2017 elections impartially. It should be noted that articles prepared within the commercial agreement were distinguished from the editorial materials.

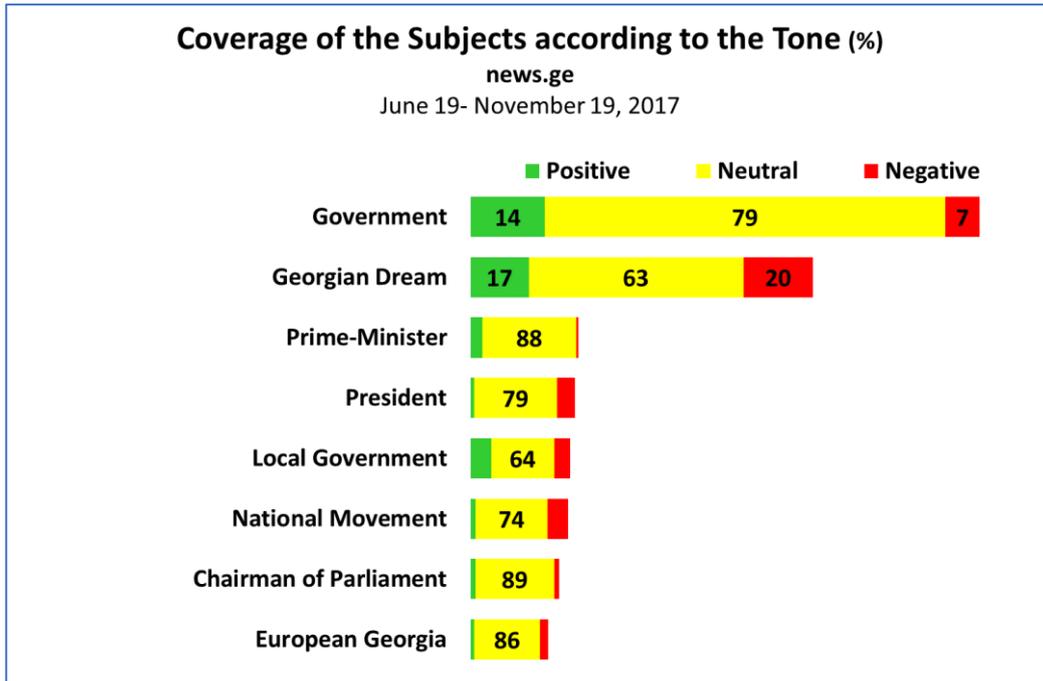


news.ge

*During the monitoring period news.ge did not reveal particularly positive or negative attitude towards any political force. However, Kakha Kaladze, Tbilisi mayoral candidate of Georgian Dream, was given more coverage than all other Tbilisi mayoral candidates. Positive tone indicators prevailed towards Kaladze.*

News.ge most actively covered the activities of the Government (31%) and the Georgian Dream (21%). Exceptionally high percentage of positive tone was not revealed while covering any of the monitoring subjects. The highest rates of negative tone were revealed in terms of former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (59%) and Ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (31%).

During the pre-election period, the articles on Kakha Kaladze's pre-election meetings were posted on the website. There were frequent cases when the articles with exact same text were published with commercial indications on interpressnews.ge, but without such indications on news.ge (for example, "Kakha Kaladze met with representatives of religious confessions", October 5; "Kakha Kaladze met with the population ", September 25). It is essential for the website to put proper indications on commercial materials.



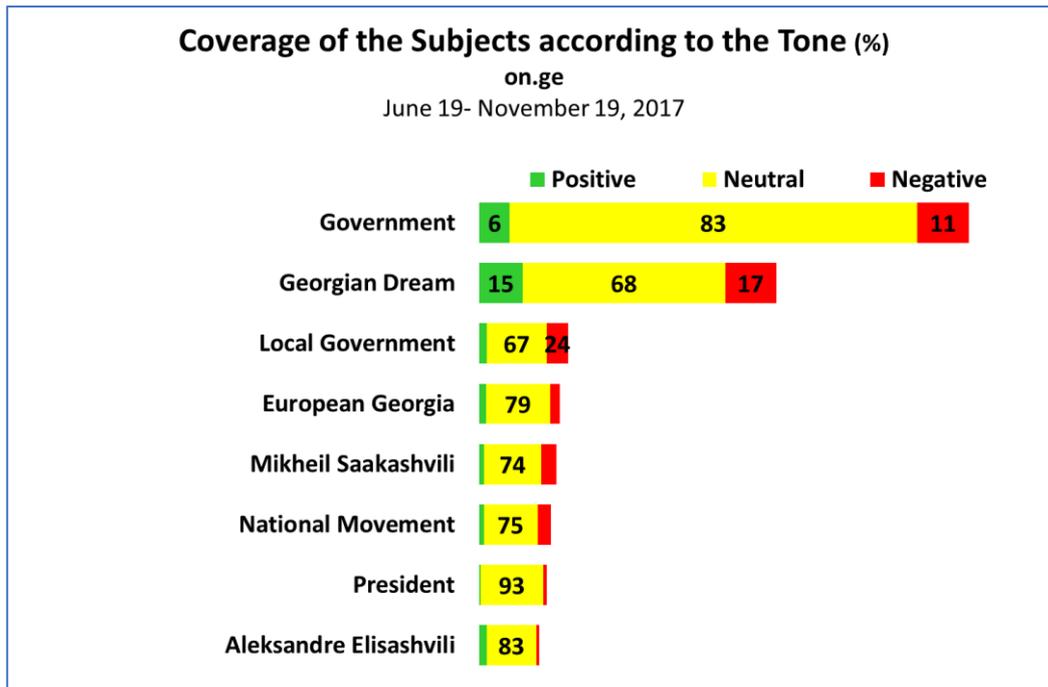
on.ge

*During the monitoring period on.ge did not reveal positive or negative attitude towards any political force. Journalism standards and ethical norms were protected on the website. On.ge offered its readers a wide variety of multimedia products.*

On.ge most actively covered the activities of the Government (31%) and Georgian Dream (19%). Exceptionally high rates of positive or negative tone had not been identified during coverage of any of the monitoring subjects. Pre-election activities of Tbilisi mayoral candidates were covered on the website impartially. Election Day, violations at voting precincts and election results were covered intensively and impartially.

The articles prepared within the commercial agreement on on.ge were published with the appropriate reference; however, the indication might not be clear for every reader. The following indication was detected: "published for distribution purposes". The website should come up with clearer formulation.

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that On.ge has been impartially covering current events in the country. There were no cases of violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms revealed on the website.



presa.ge

*During the monitoring period presa.ge most actively covered Georgian Dream and Kakha Kaladze. There were no cases of particularly gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms, but there were cases when the journalists did not specify sources of information in the publication. Articles prepared within the commercial agreement on Presa.ge were not separated from editorial materials.*

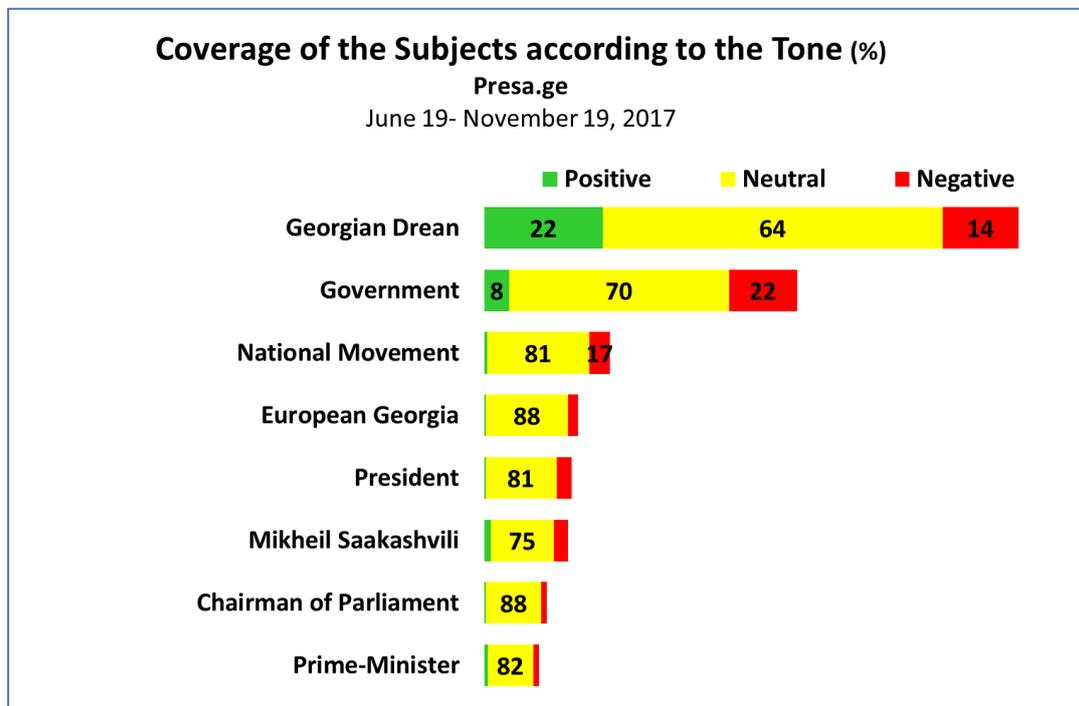
Presa.ge most actively covered the activities of the Georgian Dream (34%) and the Government (20%). Exceptionally high percentage of positive tone was not revealed when covering any of the monitoring subjects. The highest rate of negative tone was revealed towards former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (58%). It is noteworthy that the website devoted four times more coverage to Kakha Kaladze's pre-election activities than to all other Tbilisi mayoral candidates.

There were cases when the presa.ge journalists did not specify the source of their information; For example: "According to information obtained from the State Chancellery, dismissal of Subari is related to the growing dissatisfaction of the refugees ... the Prime Minister's entourage said that Giorgi Kvirikashvili has already taken a decision to "disqualify" Subari" ("Subari leaves office", September 5).

For example, on September 5<sup>th</sup>, six websites published an article on meeting of Kakha Kaladze and the Ambassador of the Great Britain. From these six websites, only few indicated that the material was commercial. Some did not have proper indications, including presa.ge.

On October 4, the article regarding the Ozurgeti Mayoral candidate's meeting with population was published by livepress.ge with advertising reference, while presa.ge published the same

article without proper reference. In case the material is not prepared within commercial agreement and is distributed by the party press office, the website should indicate the source of the material clearly, declaring that it is not an editorial content.



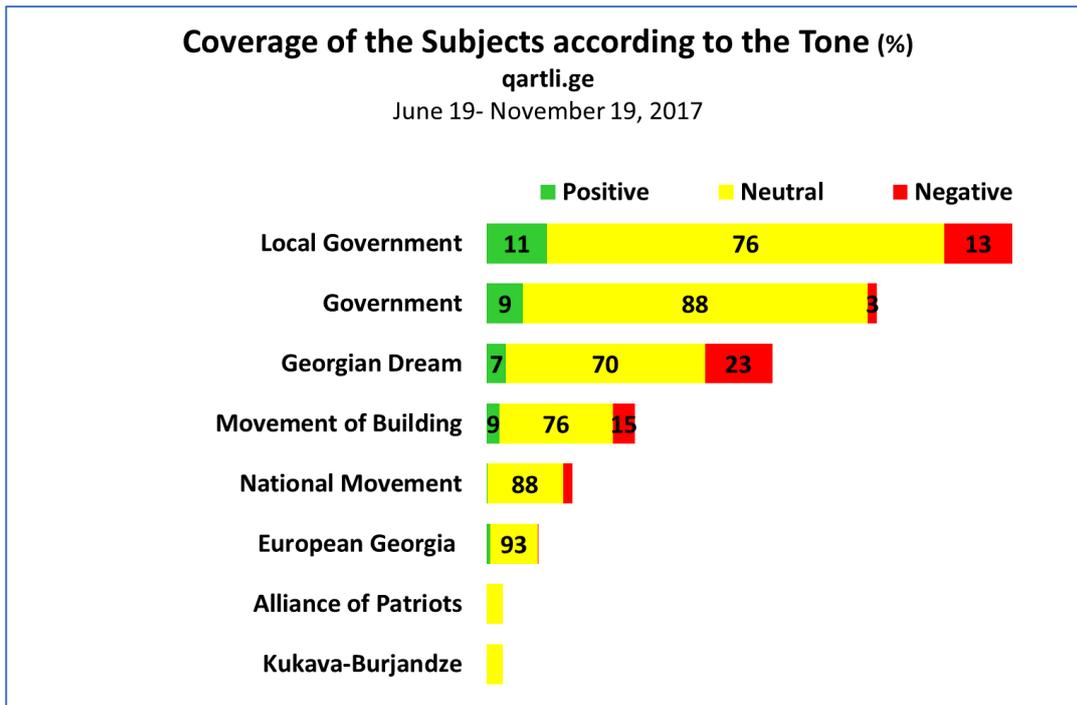
### Qartli.ge

*During the monitoring period qartli.ge did not have a particularly positive or negative attitude towards any political force. The website actively covered social and economic problems in the region.*

Qartli.ge most actively covered the activities of the Local Government (32%), the Government (24%) and the Georgian Dream (18%). Exceptionally high percentage of positive or negative tone was not revealed when covering any of the monitoring subjects.

Qartli.ge has been actively covering the successful infrastructure projects implemented in the region as well as critical assessments of unfulfilled works. Pre-election activities of Gori Mayoral candidates were impartially covered.

Qartli.ge properly separated the editorial materials from the articles prepared within the framework of a commercial agreement. However, the advertisement sign was posted at the end of the articles, and it could be possible that it was not visible for every reader. It is best to place the advertisement in such a way that it can be easily visible for any reader.



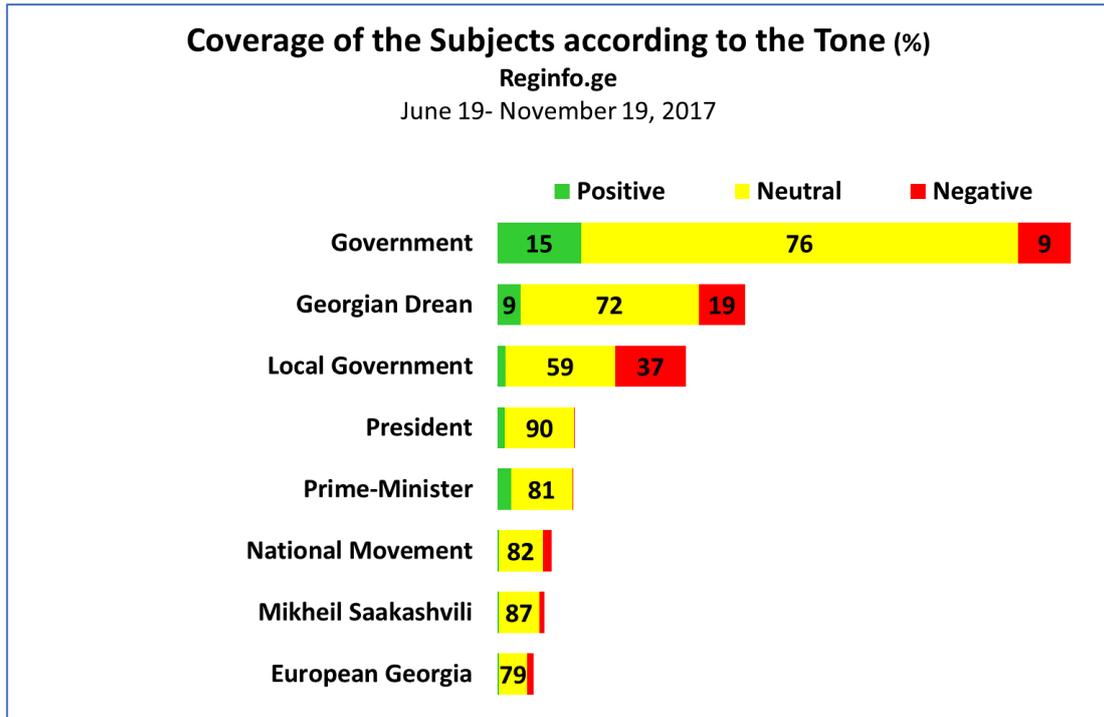
#### reginfo.ge

*During the monitoring period, reginfo.ge did not have a particularly positive or negative attitude towards any political force. Negative tone indicators were slightly higher on the website when covering the Local Government.*

Reginfo.ge was most actively covering the activities of the Government (39%), Georgian Dream (17%) and local Government (13%). The high rate of positive tone was not revealed towards any monitoring subject. The highest percentage of negative tone was revealed towards the Local Government (37%).

Reginfo.ge regularly published articles about spending budget funds (for example, "Head of Forest Agency took 13 bonuses in one year", August 22; "19 bonuses of Borjomi Gamgebeli in two years", August 23; Deputy Minister Shalva Khutsishvili took bonuses 41 times in a year, "November 3;" Head of Financial Police Giorgi Badashvili took 29 bonuses in one year ", November 7th.)

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that reginfo.ge impartially covered the ongoing political processes in the country. The website was particularly active and critical while covering issues related to the expenditure of budgetary funds.



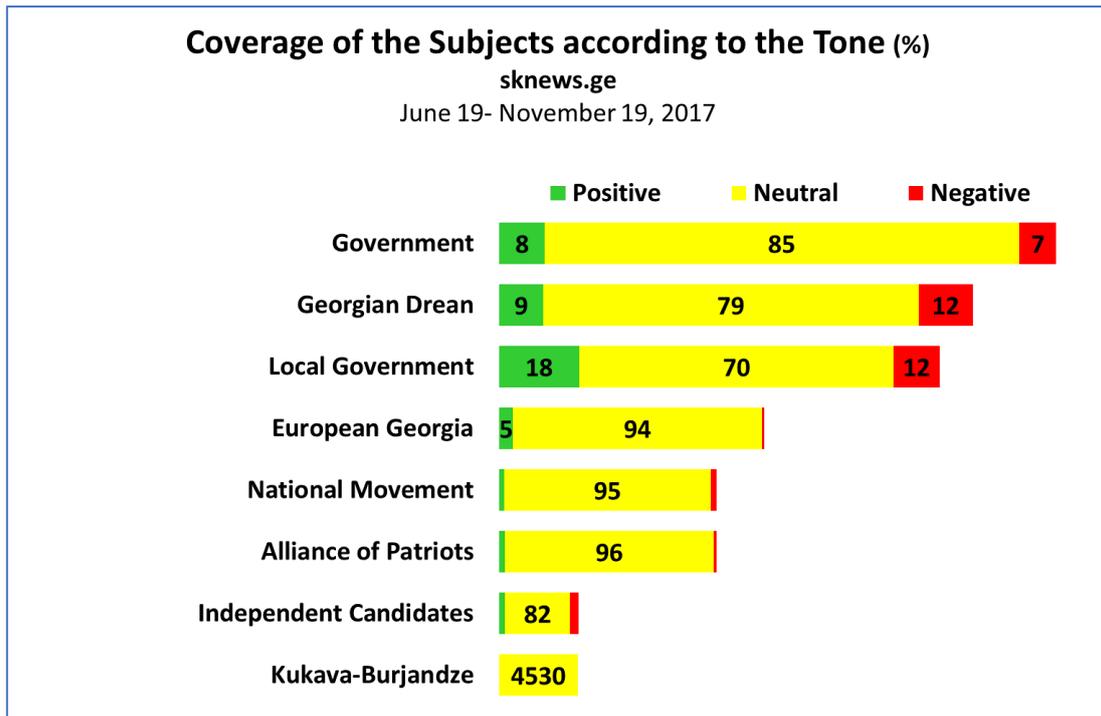
sknews.ge

*During the monitoring period sknews.ge had no positive or negative attitude towards any political force. Journalism standards and ethical norms were protected on the website. Sknews.ge offered customers a wide range of multimedia products.*

Sknews.ge most actively covered the activities of the government (21%), Georgian Dream (18%) and Local Government (17%). Exceptionally high percentage of positive or negative tone was not revealed towards any monitoring subject.

Sknews.ge actively and impartially covered pre-election activities of other party mayoral candidates (e.g. "Akhaltikhe Mayoral Candidate of European Georgia Vazha Chitashvili", July 18, "Akhaltikhe Mayoral Candidate Irakli Bardzimadze from the National Movement", August 6). The election process, elections results and procedure for the second round of voting were actively and impartially covered.

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that sknews.ge impartially covered the 2017 elections. It should be noted that the website had a variety of sources of information in separate articles.

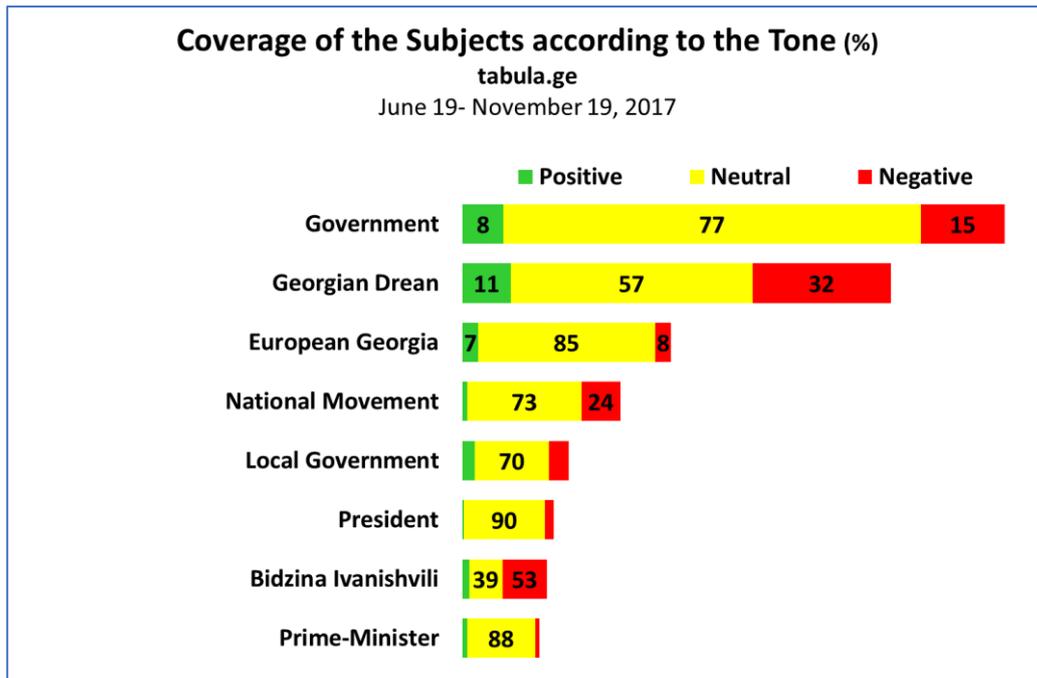


tabula.ge

*During the monitoring period, the negative tone indicators towards the ruling party and the United National Movement prevailed on tabula.ge. There were no cases of gross violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms on the website.*

Tabula.ge most actively covered the activities of the Government (27%), Georgian Dream (21%) and European Georgia (10%). High rates of negative tone were revealed towards the former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (53%), Georgian Dream (32%), ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (29%) and United National Movement (24%). High rates of positive tone was not detected towards any monitoring subject.

Kakha Kaladze (44%) was most actively covered among Tbilisi Mayor candidates. The highest rate of negative tone was reported while covering Tbilisi Mayor candidate - Kakha Kaladze (24%). Tabula.ge actively and impartially covered the election process, results and procedures related to the second round of elections.

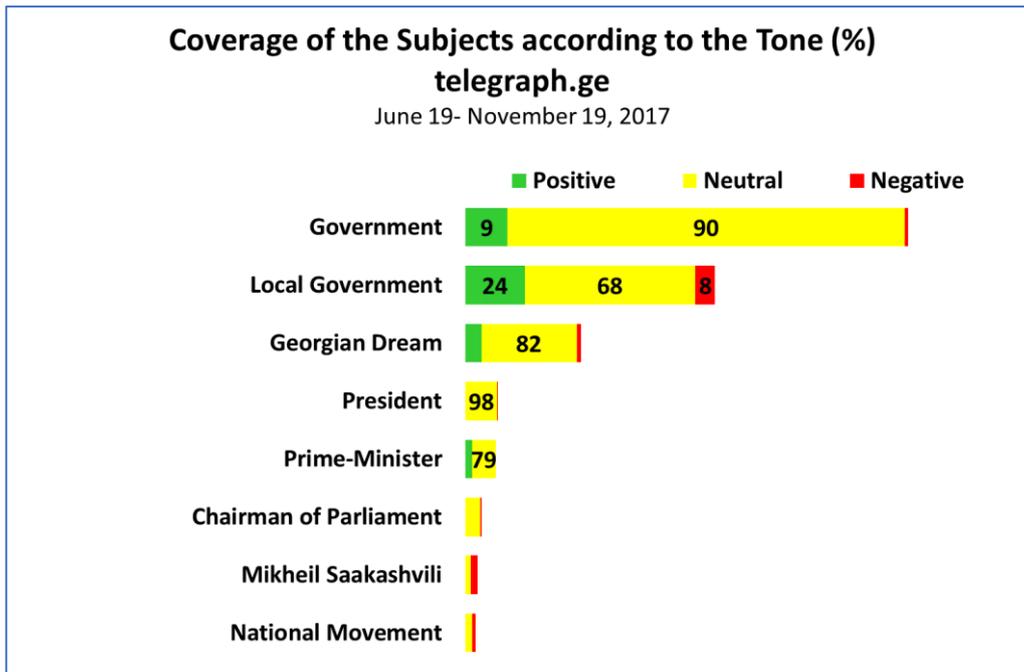


telegraph.ge

*During the monitoring period, telegraph.ge did not show particularly positive or negative attitude towards any political force, but the website provided less critical analysis of social and infrastructural projects in the region. The website mostly covered the activities of the ruling party.*

Telegraph.ge provided the most active coverage of the activities of the government (47%), local government (27%) and the Georgian Dream (12%). While covering these entities, no exceptionally high rates of positive or negative tone were revealed.

Telegraph.ge less frequently covered the activities of various political parties. It is worth mentioning that over 75% of the articles published on the website were dedicated to covering activities of the central and regional government. During the coverage of these issues, less critical analysis was provided and diversity of sources was not ensured.



## Conclusion

Compared to the monitoring results carried out in previous years, Georgian online media has improved in terms of balancing the coverage of political forces as well as protection of journalistic standards and ethical norms. In regional publications, there were no cases of gross violation of journalistic ethical norms.

The main challenge of online media is the lack of in-depth reporting. The websites, in most cases, only cover the statements of politicians and the representatives of various state agencies. However, in regional publications, there are more and more critical and multilateral analysis of social and economic problems. Also, in regional editions we have more frequently encountered the diversity of sources of information in separate articles; while discussing regional problems in separate articles, we have been provided with number of opinions of government officials and local people.

The serious challenge of online media is the inappropriate separation of articles prepared within the commercial agreement from advertising materials. Such cases were particularly frequently encountered during the coverage of the Georgian Dream's mayoral candidate Kakha Kaladze. There were frequent cases when these articles were posted on several websites simultaneously and only some of them indicated that these articles were advertising.

Critical questions towards election subjects and critical analysis of their promises were rarely encountered. In most of the cases, the websites published promises of different candidates without verification and analysis.

The vast majority of online publications actively and impartially covered the election process as well as the results of the election and procedures related to the second round.

**Recommendations:**

- Online publications should provide the reader with more in-depth reporting.
- Journalists should try to provide a reader with a variety of sources and opinions around the topic. Opinions provided in article should not be single-sided and should allow the readers to make conclusions.
- Journalists should provide opinions of local populations when they report on local affairs.
- Journalists should be more critical towards the statements of the politicians. They should pay more attention to fact-checking and analysis.
- Online media outlets should indicate sources of information. Especially in cases when the information contains allegations against any politician or government agency;
- Regional online publications should pay more attention to the in-depth analysis of financial and infrastructure problems in the region. It is important that opinions of local population are voiced regarding these topics.
- Online media outlets should clearly indicate if the material published on the website is not prepared by the editorial staff.
- Online media outlets should clearly distinguish articles from editorial materials prepared within the commercial agreement.
- If a website published materials distributed by party press offices, clear reference to the source should be made.

## Print Media Monitoring



The Civic Development Institute (CDI) carried out the monitoring of print media within the frameworks of the EU-UNDP funded project Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2017 Local Government Elections in Georgia. The monitoring started on 19 June 2017 and was completed on 19 November 2017.

Monitoring was carried out on the following media outlets: Rezonansi, Kviris Palitra, Asaval-Dasavali, Guria News, Akhali Gazeti, Postscriptumi, Spektri, Guriis Moambe, Trialetis Ekspresi, Borjomi, Svaneti, Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi.

### Monitoring Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative monitoring was carried out on the selected media outlets. Quantitative research focused on the frequency and tone of coverage of monitoring subjects in selected media outlets. Qualitative research focused on whether the selected media outlet protected the norms of journalistic ethics, such as: verification of facts, appropriate language, diversity of sources of information, reasonable balance of sources, refraining from visual, audio, or any other kind of manipulation, evidence-based conclusions provided by the journalist. Monitoring was carried out on all articles of selected media outlets from the beginning of the monitoring until its completion.

### Key Findings

- No offensive or discriminating terminology which was regularly observed in several newspapers published in Tbilisi during the past years of monitoring was detected in any regional newspaper.
- The vast majority of regional publications cover political forces impartially.
- The vast majority of regional publications actively cover social problems in the region and seek to obtain comments from local authorities about these problems.
- The vast majority of regional publications are actively covering the successful projects implemented by local authorities, as well as provide critical assessments of unfulfilled works.
- There are interviews in regional publications where journalists reflect on pre-election promises of local government representatives and ask whether they are fulfilled.
- Regional publications often contain the diversity of sources of information in separate articles. While covering the problems in the region, the respondents are often the representatives of the government, as well as local residents;

- There are no particularly positive or negative attitudes revealed towards any election subject in the regional press;
- Most regional publications fairly distribute space to the pre-election activities of different parties;
- Only two regional publications (Borjomi and Svaneti) reveal positive attitude towards local or central government;
- All the regional publications separated advertising articles from editorial materials.
- Improper reference to advertising materials is a serious problem in the newspaper Rezonansi.
- Cases of publishing unverified information have been revealed in the newspaper Kviris Palitra.
- All editions of Asaval-Dasavali violated all standards and norms of journalistic ethics.
- The majority of the newspapers covered the election results and the procedures related to the second round of elections.

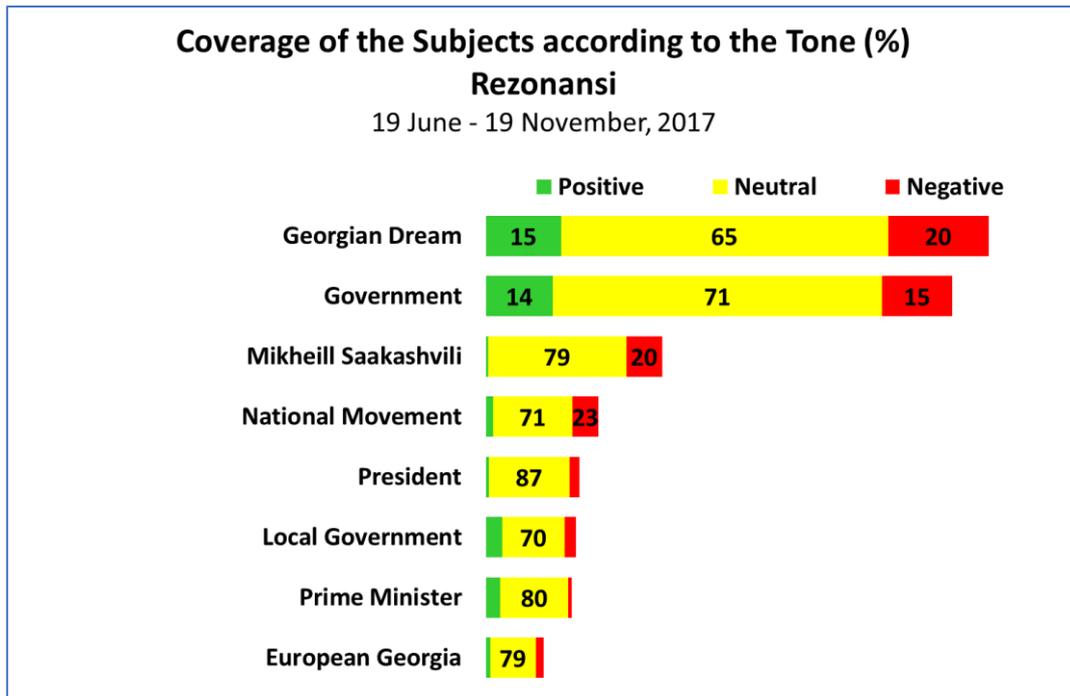
### Rezonansi

*During the monitoring period, Rezonansi did not show any positive or negative attitude towards any political force. The cases of violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms have not been identified. However, it should be noted that the articles prepared in Rezonansi within commercial agreement are not distinguishable from editorial materials.*

During the monitoring period the activities of the Georgian Dream (26%), Government (24%) and ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (9%) were most actively covered. Exceptionally high percentage of positive or negative tone was not revealed while covering any of the monitoring subjects. Among the Tbilisi Mayoral Candidates Kakha Kaladze had the highest rate (42%) of positive tone.

The articles prepared in Rezonansi, within the commercial agreement were published without proper reference. During the last years' monitoring such articles were put in frames and on the last page of the newspaper it was written with very small font that the articles in the frame were advertising ones. During this monitoring period, some of the advertising articles were not put in the frame, and the title of section was put with the same formatting at the beginning of commercial articles as in case of editorial material. For example, during the given monitoring period two rather extensive articles were published under the section "Movlena" about Georgian Dream and Tbilisi Mayoral candidate Kakha Kaladze ("For Loyalty and Love of Tbilisi- 25 candidates united under single number", September 4, p 3. "Towards City full of Lives ", September 6, p.3). The article was not referenced as advertising.

As a result of the monitoring we can conclude that Rezonansi impartially covers the political processes in the country. In the articles of the newspaper there are no cases of gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms. However, the fundamental problem is the inadequate separation of advertising articles from editorial materials.



#### Kviris Palitra

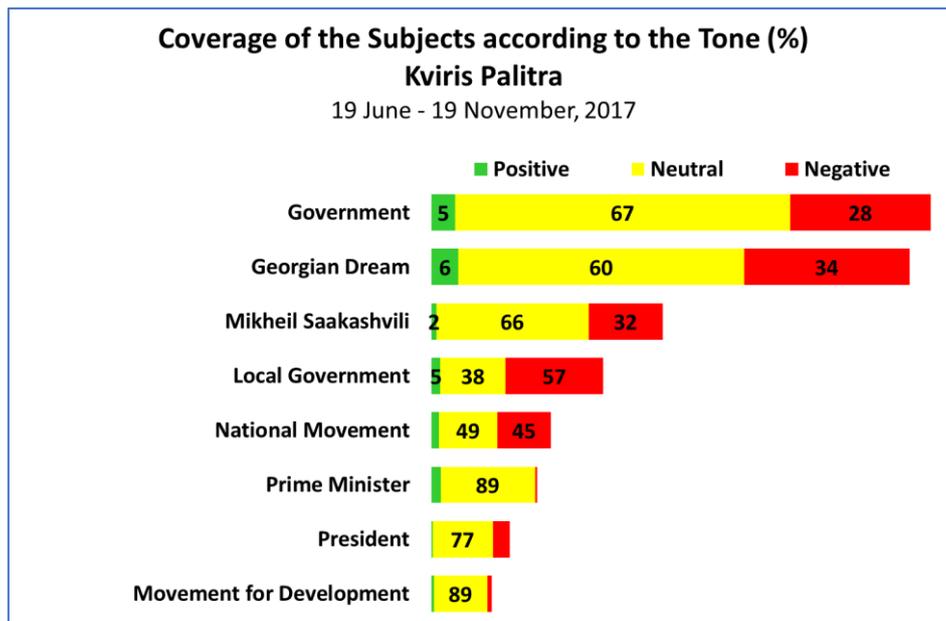
*During the monitoring period, in Kviris Palitra the negative tone indicators prevailed while covering the activities of the Government, Georgian Dream and Local Government as well as the United National Movement and ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili. However, this criticism was mainly revealed in the statements of the respondents and not in the texts of journalists. There were no cases of particularly gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms. However, it is noteworthy that many times we have encountered cases of dissemination of unverified information by journalists while reporting on the activities of former government officials.*

Kviris Palitra most actively covered the activities of the Government (26%), Georgian Dream (25%) and ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (12%). The highest rates of negative tone were revealed towards the Local Government (57%), the Speaker of the Parliament (51%) and the United National Movement (45%). Kakha Kukava had the highest percentage (45%) of positive tone among Tbilisi mayoral candidates.

In Kviris Palitra we repeatedly encountered the cases of dissemination of unverified information. In the article "According to one version, "Zooni" [nickname] was loyal to Saakashvili and the Ukrainian security services removed him" (11-17 September, p. 5), the journalist wrote: "Temur Makhouri, the same Ruslan Papaskiri, was involved in the attempt of murder of businessman Badri Patarkatsishvili in 2007. At that time, the special services entrusted this case to Gia Dgebuadze, nicknamed "Matera". It was said that "Matera" met Uva Akhmedov in Dubai to negotiate regarding this issue. Ruslan Papaskiri should be the killer". The article did not indicate how the journalist obtained this information. There were cases when Kviris Palitra journalists did not specify the source of information. For example, "According to Kviris Palitra, State Audit

Office plans to interrogate the members of the National Movement and its donors” (“Nomenclature Capitalism in Georgia”, September 11-17, p. 6). It is noteworthy that the dissemination of unsubstantiated information by the journalists was mainly encountered while covering the activities of the United National Movement.

During the pre-election period Kviris Palitra interviewed Tbilisi mayoral candidates. These interviews were prepared professionally and there was no positive or negative attitude of the journalists revealed towards any mayoral candidates.



### Asaval-Dasavali

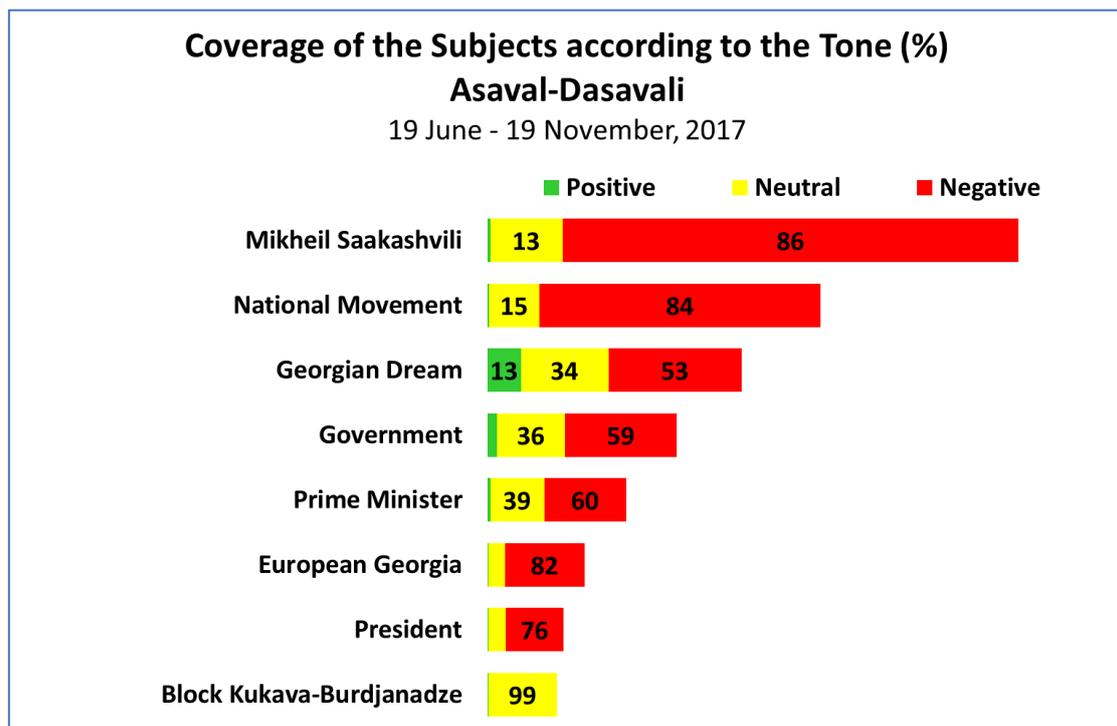
*During the monitoring period in Asaval-Dasavali we systematically encountered the cases of extremely gross violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms. The publication expressed extremely negative attitude towards the former and incumbent government officials. There were systematic cases of ungrounded judgements and using insulting language from journalists. The newspaper devotes a considerable amount to the respondents who are distinguished by frequent use of offensive terminology.*

The newspaper most actively covered the activities of the former president Mikheil Saakashvili (25%), the United National Movement (16%), the Georgian Dream (12%) and the Government (9%). The highest percentage of negative tone was revealed towards "Girch" (86%), Ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (86%), United National Movement (84%), European Georgia (82%), Republican Party (76%) and the President of Georgia (76%). The highest rate of positive tone was revealed towards the former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (19%). The high rate of neutral tone was revealed towards the Block of Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Kakha Kukava-Democratic Movement - Free Georgia (99%). Kakha Kaladze received the highest rate (50%) of positive tone

among Tbilisi Mayor candidates, while Elene Khoshtaria (85%) and Zaal Udumashvili (81%) received the highest rates of negative tone.

Journalists of Asaval-Dasavali often used insulting terminology when covering politicians; For example, "Imagine how the Republican Party (from now on penis!) has to fall, that it cannot find any supporter in the political and public elections, rather than this lesbian!" ("Republicans support a lesbian candidate for Tbilisi Mayor!") August 27, pp. 8). We regularly encountered the cases of biased reporting and unverified discussions from journalists; There were many articles where the United National Movement (UNM) was accused putting fires (for example, "UNM turned fires into a weapon of political fight", August 21-27, p 2, "August Borjomi", August 28 - September 3, p 2, "Burnt Georgia", September 4-10, p. 8). In these articles, the journalists did not attempt to provide different opinion to the readers.

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that Asaval-Dasavali is covering ongoing political processes in a biased and single-sided manner. Journalists of the newspaper do not avoid dissemination of unverified information, systematic use of unsubstantiated judgements and insulting terminology.



### Guria news

*During the monitoring period, Guria News did not reveal a positive or negative attitude towards any political force. The cases of gross violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms have not been identified.*

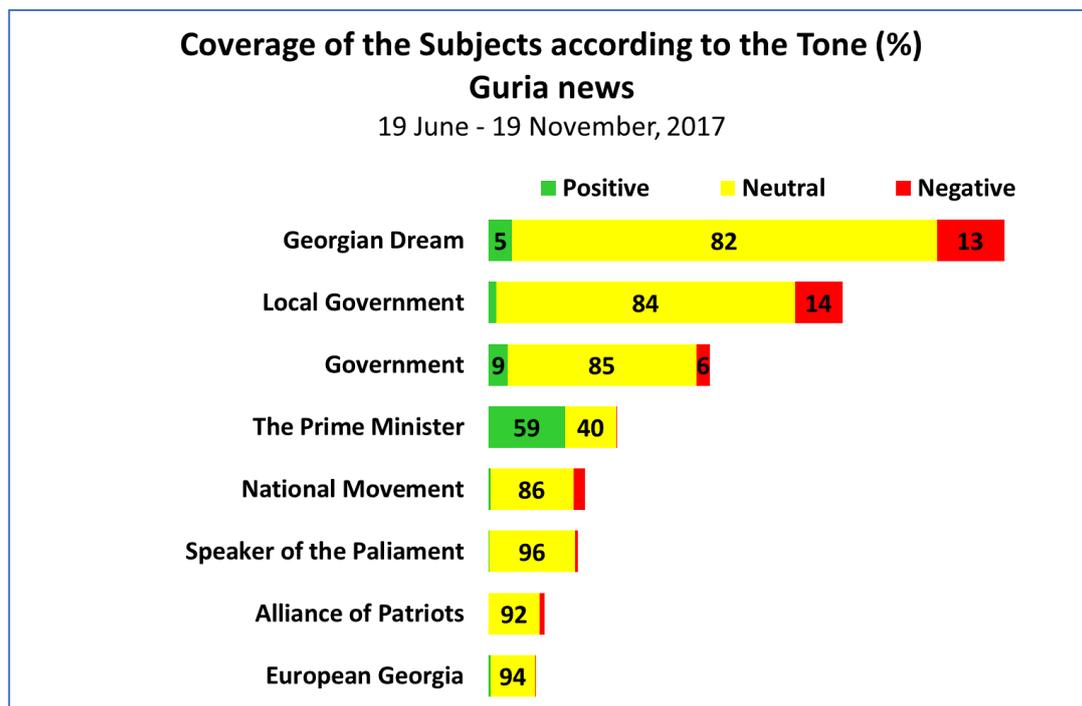
Guria news mostly covered the activities of the Georgian Dream (31%), the Local Government (21%) and the Government (13%). Exceptionally high percentage of negative tone was not

revealed while covering any of the monitoring subjects. The high rate of positive tone was revealed towards the Prime Minister (59%).

Guria News was quite actively covering both the regional and national affairs. In the course of reporting the regional events, attempts were made to present the views of the government officials as well as the local population. The newspaper often provided a critical analysis of the social and infrastructural problems in the region (for example: the articles: "Problems of the Flooded Resort", August 14, p 4; "How many times and to whom we have addressed - the eternal problem of one village", October 12, p.3). During the monitoring period, we encountered Georgian Dream advertising materials with advertising reference. It should be noted that Guria News properly distinguishes advertising articles from editorial materials.

The second round of voting was covered impartially and intensively. Guria News provided information to the public regarding procedures for the second round as well as the results of voting. (For example, "According to Preliminary Results, Konstantine Sharashenidze Was Elected as the Mayor of Ozurgeti," 13 November, p.1; "Main News: Georgian Dream Candidate Is Winning in the Second Round in Five Out of Six Districts; 13 November, p.1)

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that Guria News is covering ongoing political processes impartially. The newspaper preserves journalistic standards and ethical norms.



### Borjomi

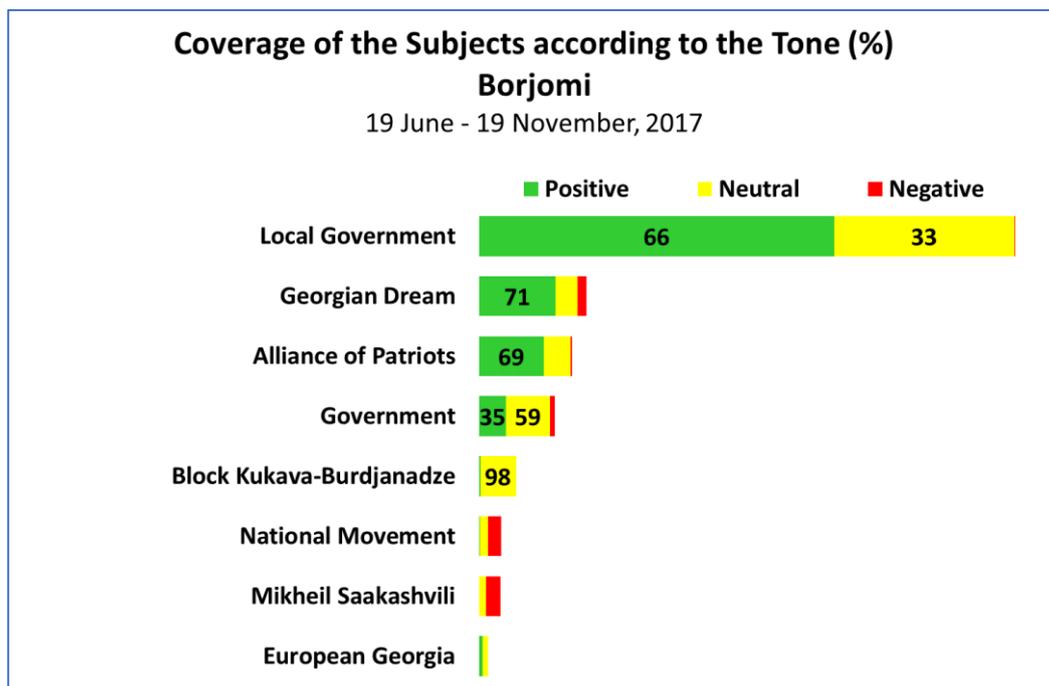
*During the monitoring period, Borjomi has shown extremely positive attitude towards the Local Government. More than half of the articles were about the activities carried out by the Local Government in the region.*

Borjomi most actively covered the activities of the Local government (58%), Georgian Dream (12%) and Alliance of Patriots (10%). Positive tone indicators exceeded in respect to all three entities.

The Local Government was covered by Borjomi in a biased manner. Journalists did not show attempts to present different opinions regarding the events in the region to the readers. Most respondents were representatives of local government and MPs of Georgian Dream. There were almost no critical opinions and multilateral analysis of social problems in the region.

The positive attitude towards the ruling party was noticeable in the texts of journalists and in the headings of the articles; For example: "Tired of taking care of voters" (July 13, p. 2). It is noteworthy that in the pre-election period among political parties only Georgian Dream's mayoral candidates were covered in the region ("Strong Self-Government for Stronger State", 5 October, p. 1). During the second round of elections, Borjomi clearly supported a candidate from the Alliance of Patriots.

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that Borjomi is covering current events in the region from one point of view only. It should be noted that the main page of the newspaper reads the note: "Always Be Informed about Our Work. Borjomi Municipality ". If the newspaper is financed from the budget funds, it is important that it declares so more clearly.



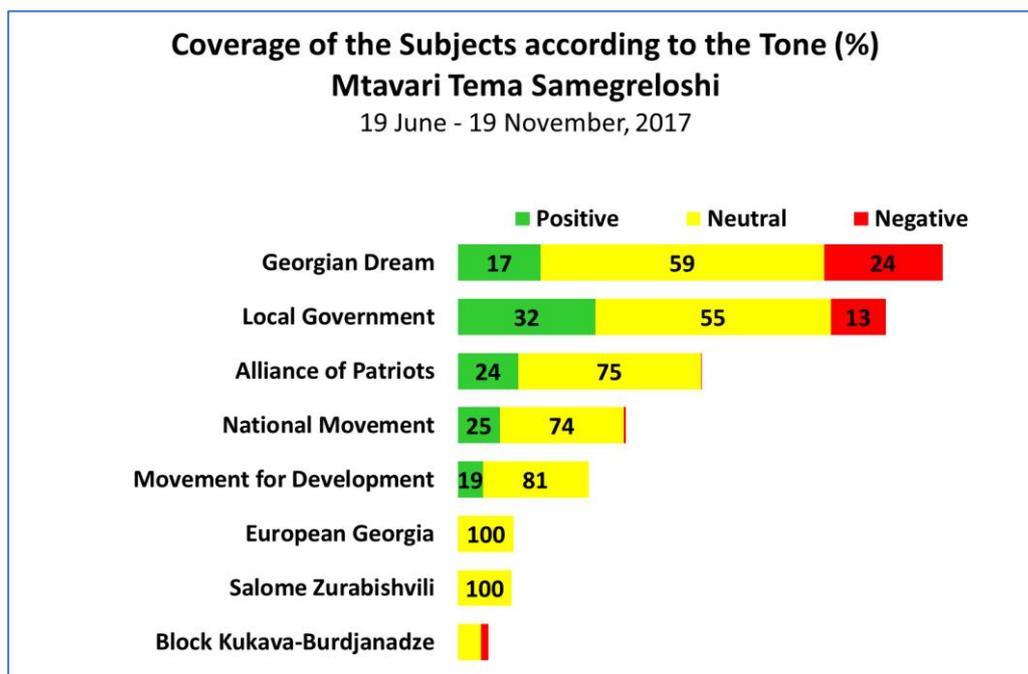
#### Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi

*During the monitoring period, the newspaper Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi did not reveal clearly positive or negative attitude towards any political force. The publication mainly covered the events in the region. The cases of gross violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms have not been identified.*

The newspaper Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi most actively covered the activities of Georgian Dream (30%) and Local Government (26%). Exceptionally high percentage of positive or negative tone was not revealed while covering any of the monitoring subjects. During the pre-election period, the newspaper did not actively cover election programs of Poti mayoral candidates.

The newspaper actively covered the social issues and infrastructural projects implemented in the region. It is noteworthy that in most cases journalists tried to provide readers with the opinions of both government officials and the local population (for instance in articles "Senaki from elections to elections", 19-26 June, pp 3-4; "Two families living on Katsadze Street seek for help", October 30 - November 6, p. 5).

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that the newspaper Mtavari Tema Samegreloshi impartially covers the current political processes in the region. The newspaper preserves journalistic standards and ethical norms.



### Guriis Moambe

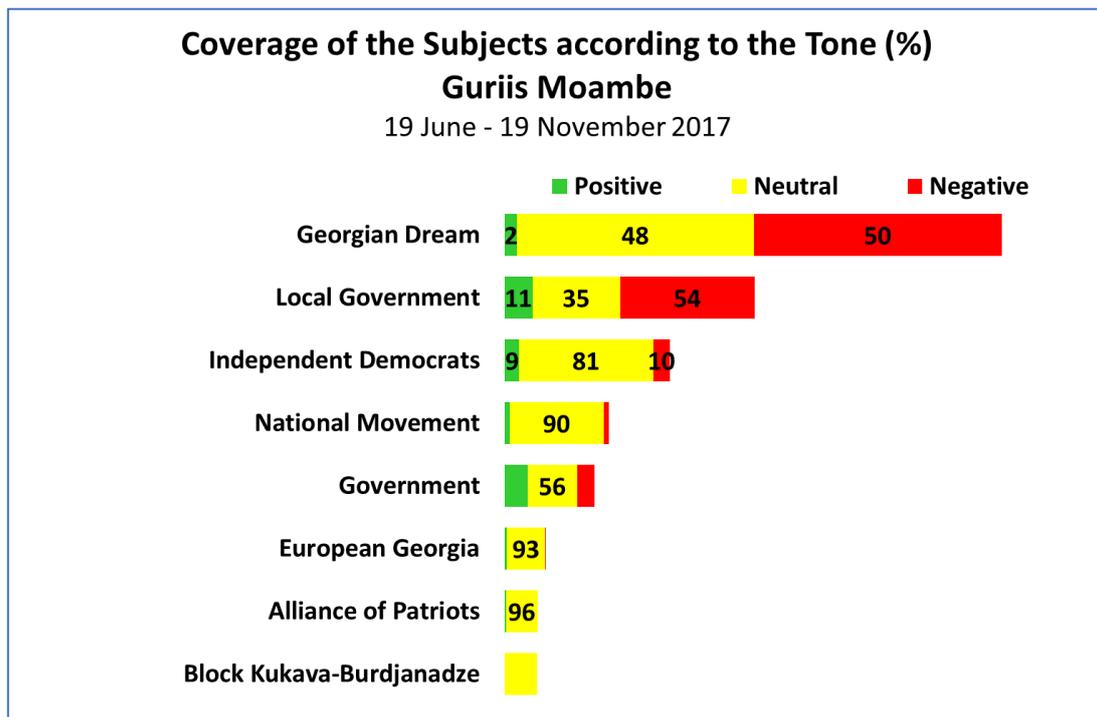
*During the monitoring period Guriis Moambe expressed quite critical attitude towards the ruling party. The cases of gross violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms have not been identified.*

Guriis Moambe most actively covered the activities of Georgian Dream (38%) and Local Government (19%). Fairly high percentage of negative tone was revealed in coverage of former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (72%), Local Government (54%) and Georgian Dream (50%). High rates of positive tone have not been identified during coverage of any of the monitoring subjects.

Guria Moambe was distinguished by the critical analysis of the work carried out by the Local Government. However, it should be noted that the publication also covered the successful

projects implemented in the region. The social problems in the region and the opinions of the local population were actively covered. In Guriis Moambe there were articles on the problems of socially vulnerable people in the region (For example, in the articles: "Being 8 months pregnant, I have not eaten for 3 days, while my seven-year-old son has been hungry for a number of times." October 2, p. 5; "I did not go to work in Turkey, I thought I would lose social status and now my four children are hungry", October 16, p. 3).

As a result of the monitoring we can conclude that Guriis Moambe is quite critical towards the ruling team. The newspaper is distinguished with a critical analysis of the works carried out in the region.



### Postskriptumi

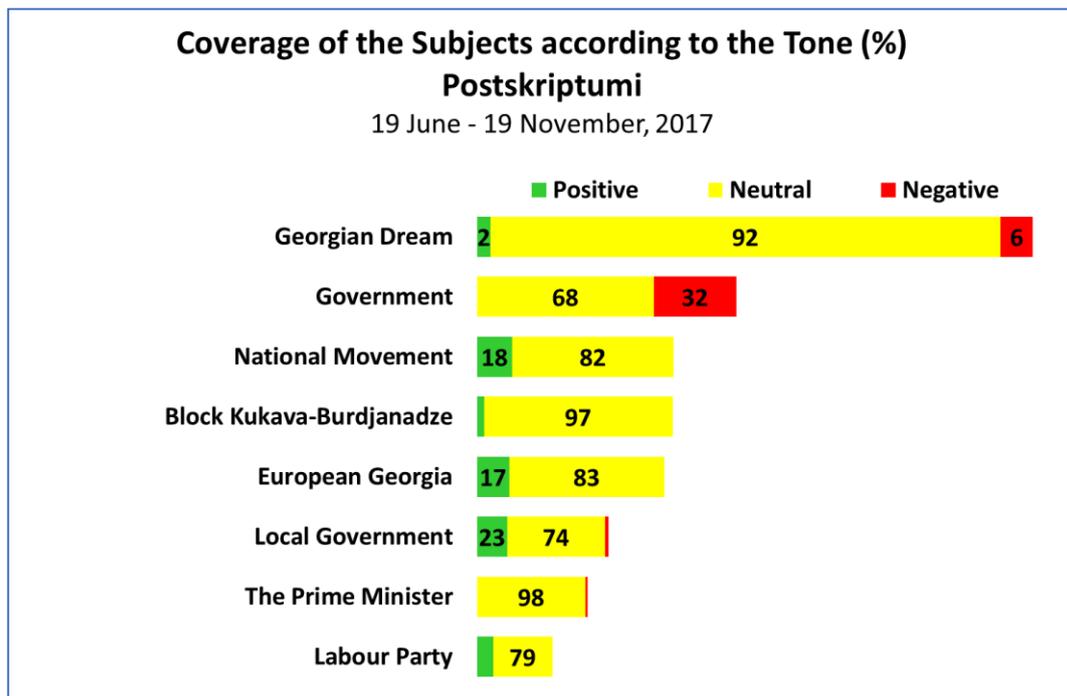
*During the monitoring period, Postskriptumi did not reveal unequivocally positive or negative attitude towards any political force, but negative tone indicators prevailed while covering the activities of the government. The cases of gross violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms have not been identified.*

The newspaper most actively covered the activities of Georgian Dream (29%) and Government (13%). Exceptionally high percentage of positive tone was not revealed while covering any of the monitoring subjects. The high rate of negative tone was revealed in relation to the government (32%).

Unlike many other regional publications selected for monitoring, Postskriptumi covered important issues from different regions. In the pre-election period, Postskriptumi actively covered information regarding Kutaisi mayoral candidates (for example: "Parties' Pre-election Preparations in Kutaisi and New Mayoral Candidates", 10-16 July, pp. 1-2; "Which party will not

have mayoral candidate in Kutaisi", 17 -23 July, p. 1). After the election, the reader was provided the detailed information regarding the election results (for example, in the articles: "Kutaisi already has new City Council", 30 October, p. 1; "The results of the local self-government elections in Imereti", 30 October, p. 3). In the newspaper, there were advertising articles on the election campaign of the Georgian Dream and the projects implemented by the central or regional government.

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that Postscriptumi has impartially covered election processes. The newspaper preserves journalistic standards and ethical norms. It should be noted that Postskriptumi properly separates advertising articles from editorial materials.



### Trialetis Ekspresi

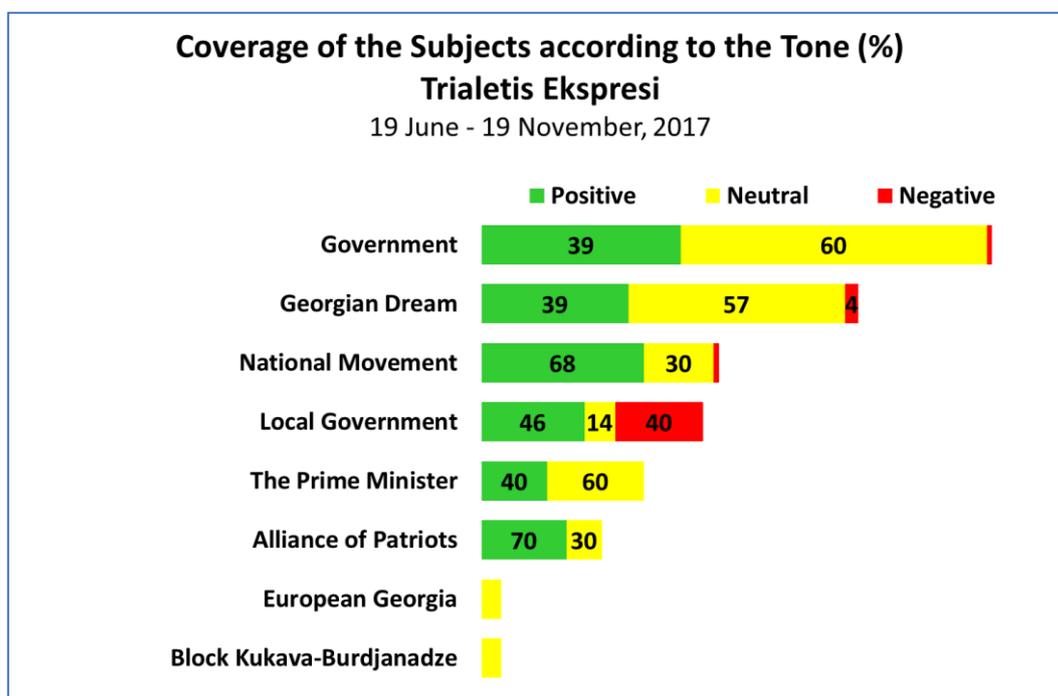
*During the monitoring period, in Trialetis Ekspresi prevailed positive tone indicators while covering all monitoring subjects. The cases of gross violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms have not been identified.*

Trialetis Ekspresi most actively covered the activities of the Government (31%) Georgian Dream (23 percent) and National Movement (14%). Positive tone indicators exceeded in the coverage of all subjects. The exceptionally high rate of negative tone was not revealed while covering any of the subjects of monitoring.

In Trialetis Ekspresi there was little coverage of the current events in the region. Respondents were mainly politicians. We rarely encountered critical analysis of current events in the region.

The newspaper objectively covered pre-election programs of Tsalka candidates ("Five candidates are fighting for Mayoral Position in Tsalka", October, p.2). However, the journalist did not seem to try to ask critical questions to mayoral candidates.

As a result of the monitoring we can conclude that Trialetis Ekspresi is not biased in favor of any political party. The main challenge of the newspaper is the lack of critical analysis of events in the region.



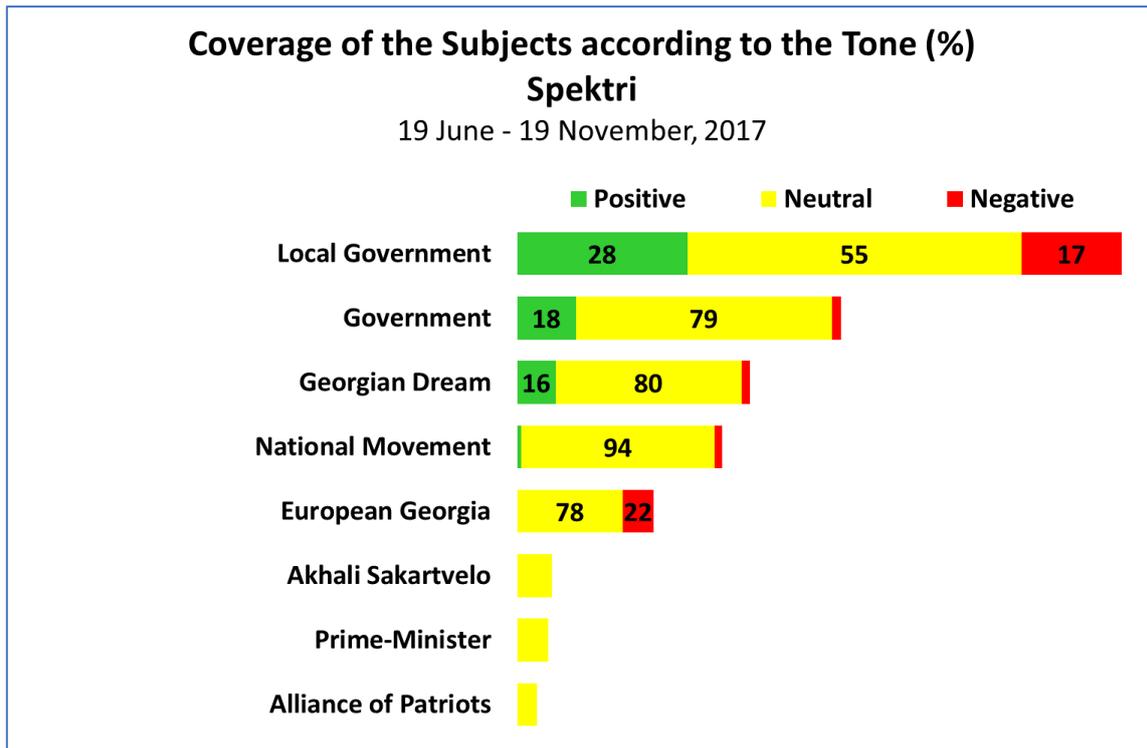
## Spektri

*During the monitoring period Spektri did not reveal particularly positive or negative attitude towards any political force. The newspaper preserves journalistic standards and ethical norms.*

The activities of the local government (44%), central government (21%), Georgian Dream (21%) and National Movement (11%) were covered most actively by Spektri. The relatively high percentage of positive tone was revealed while covering the Government (18%) and Georgian Dream (16%). The high rate of negative tone was revealed towards European Georgia (22%).

Spektri actively covered the social problems in the region. In the articles prepared on the infrastructure projects implemented in the region, the views of the local government and the population were discussed. It should be noted that in the pre-election period, Spektri provided detailed information on election procedures and election precincts (for example: "Informed Voter for Conscious Choice", September 12, p. 6, "Unified Lists of Voters and Ways of Verification", September 12, p 7). After the elections, the newspaper offered the readers detailed information about the election results (for example, "How will the municipal councils in Kakheti be staffed", October 24, p 1).

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that Spektri impartially covers current political processes. It should be noted that the newspaper clearly separated advertising material within the commercial agreement from the editorial articles.

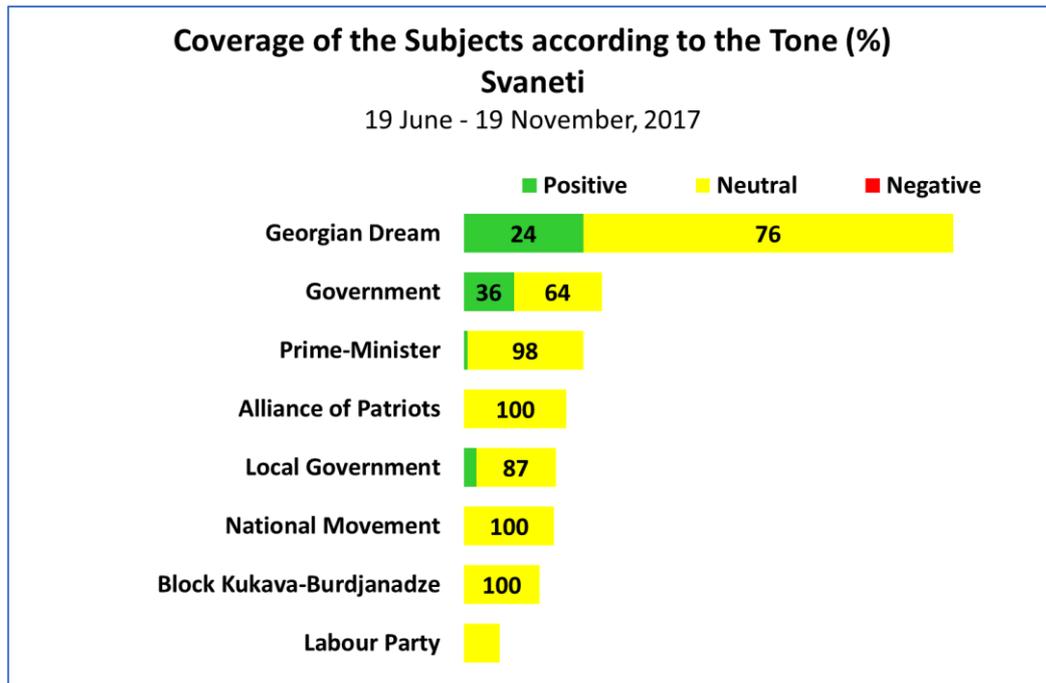


### Svaneti

*The newspaper Svaneti revealed clearly positive attitude towards the ruling team. The vast majority of published articles refer to the activities of Georgian Dream representatives.*

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that events are unilaterally covered in the newspaper Svaneti. There is no diversity of sources of information in articles; Journalists did not show the attempts to present different opinions to the reader while covering a particular issue. Activities of central or regional authorities are covered only in positive or neutral tone.

It should be noted that the newspaper Svaneti properly separated advertising articles from editorial materials.



### Akhali Gazeti

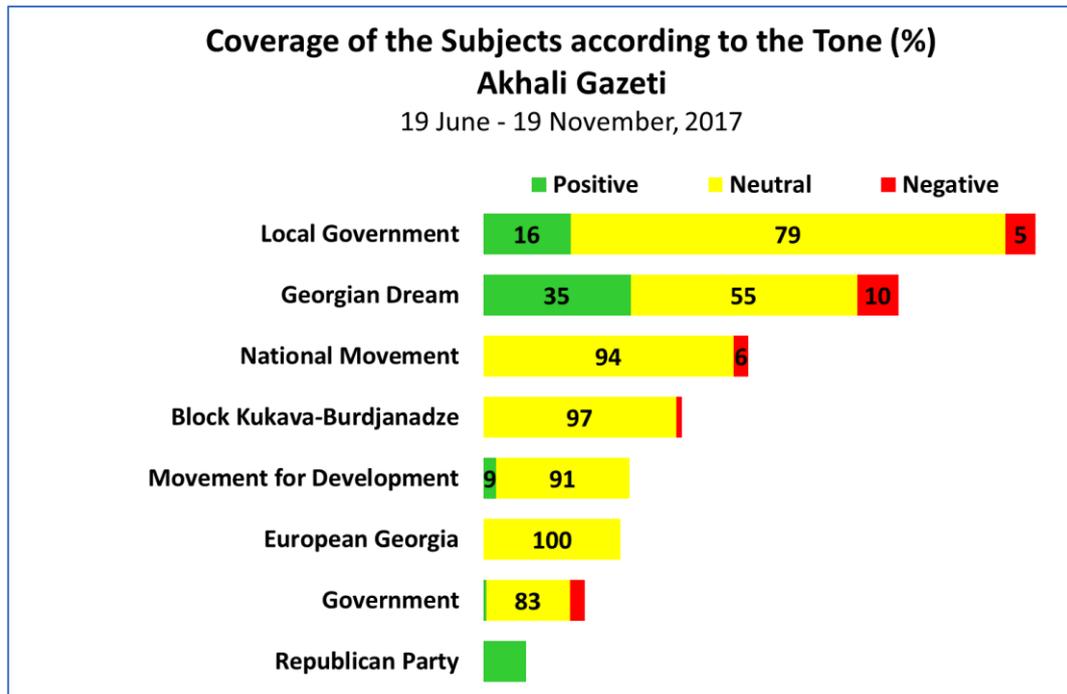
*During the monitoring period, in Akhali Gazeti positive tone indicators prevailed while covering the ruling team. The cases of gross violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms have not been identified.*

Local government (28%) and Georgian Dream (21%) were most actively covered by Akhali Gazeti. The percentage indicators of positive tone exceeded in coverage of these entities. High rates of negative tone had not been identified during coverage of any of the monitoring subjects.

In Akhali Gazeti we rarely found a comprehensive analysis of the social and economic problems existing in the region. In most cases, the respondents were the representatives of the local government and various positions were less provided in separate articles.

It should be noted that while covering Kutaisi mayoral candidates during the pre-election period Akhali Gazeti did not show positive or negative attitude towards any political force (for example, in the article "Fight for the first place in Kutaisi with Familiar Priorities and Methods", September 11-24, p. 3). Akhali Gazeti ensured the objective coverage of the election results as well (for example, "Elections 2017 - Expectations and Results", November 6-19, pp. 1-3).

Akhali Gazeti properly separated advertising articles from editorial materials.



## Conclusion

As a result of the monitoring, we can conclude that the regional press quite objectively and professionally covers current events in the regions of Georgia. In most of the publications no positive or negative attitudes towards any election subject is observed. In regional publications, we have not encountered the insulting and discriminatory terminology that we regularly monitored during previous years in many newspapers published in Tbilisi.

It is noteworthy that in the regional press we often read the comments of the local population regarding the problems or achievements in the region. The vast majority of regional publications offer readers a critical analysis of the activities carried out by the authorities in the regions. There are frequent interviews with local government officials who are asked by the journalists to analyze pre-election promises.

In all three newspapers that were selected for monitoring and are published in Tbilisi, there were various types of violations. Improper reference to advertising materials is a serious problem in the newspaper Rezonansi. It should be noted that all regional editions selected for monitoring properly separate advertising articles from editorial materials.

## Recommendations:

- During the pre-election period, the press should pay more attention to coverage and analysis of programs of political parties.
- Journalists should formulate their opinions or assessments without offensive and discriminatory terminology.
- Regional newspapers should pay more attention to analysis of financial and infrastructure problems in the region.

- When covering the problems existing in the region, it is important that the newspaper offer the reader the views of both the government officials and the local population.
- Articles prepared within a commercial agreement must be clearly separated from editorial materials.

## Annex 1

### Monitoring Subjects

1. President
2. Prime-Minister
3. Speaker of the Parliament
4. Government
5. Independent Mps
6. Local Governments
7. Government of Ajara
8. Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia
9. United National Movement
10. Mikheil Saakashvili
11. European Georgia
12. Bidzina Ivanishvili
13. Movement of Development
14. Republican Party
15. Free Democrats
16. Bloc Paata Burchuladze - State for People
17. Labour Party
18. Alliance of Patriots
19. National Forum
20. Leftist Alliance
21. Industry Will Save Georgia
22. Georgian Troupe
23. Tamaz Mechiauri - United Georgia
24. David Tevzadze – For Peaceful Georgia
25. Popular Governance
26. United Communist Party
27. Georgian Idea
28. Girchi
29. New Georgia
30. Conservators
31. Serve Georgia
32. Way of Georgia
33. New Rights
34. National Democratic Party
35. Social-Democrats
36. Christian-Democratic Movement
37. European Democrats
38. Greens Party
39. Whites
40. Georgian Party
41. Union of Traditionalists
42. People’s Party
43. Reformers
44. Socialist Georgia
45. Imedi
46. Centrists
47. Civil Alliance for Freedom
48. Our Motherland
49. IDP Party
50. National Movement Of Georgia
51. Freedom party
52. Aleksandre Elisashvili
53. Independent Mayoral Candidates
54. Georgian National Salvation Front
55. New Democrats
56. Progressive Democratic Movement
57. Georgia for Unity and Development
58. New Unity Georgia
59. Christian Conservative Party
60. Election bloc - Kukava-Burjanadze
61. For the unanimity of the people's people
62. Independent candidates

