

Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics

Study of the Media Coverage of the 2016 Parliamentary Elections

TV Talk Shows Monitoring Report

31 August – 25 September, 2016

The present report provides the findings of the monitoring of social-political talk shows aired in prime time of the following eleven TV channels: “1st Channel” of the public broadcaster, “Rustavi 2”, “Maestro”, “GDS”, “Tabula”, “Kavkasia”, “TV Pirveli”, “Obieqtivi”, “Ajara TV”, and “TV 25”.

The report covers the period from 31 August through 25 September 2016.

Methodology

The monitoring subjects were the President of Georgia, the Government of Georgia, and Political parties. The GCJE observed the appearance of the monitoring subjects in the TV talk shows and evaluated the programs according to the following criteria:

How relevant was the topic of the talk show? How adequate was the qualification of invited guests to the topic of discussion? How unbiased was the criteria of the selection of invited guests? How the discussion was going on? How well was the anchor facilitating the discussion? How well-prepared he or she was? How well-formulated were the questions asked? How well the anchor prevented the distribution of false information during the discussion? Was the hate speech used? Was the talk show audience able to get additional information that would allow them to make informed decision?

Trends:

- In comparison to the previous round of monitoring the number of talk shows dealing with election issues and subjects has increased. Two of them have to be especially mentioned. The first is the talk show “Interview” of the Georgian Public Broadcaster. The TV anchor of the show was competently reacting to nearly all statements of her respondents, allowing TV audiences to make informed judgements. Another is the third

part of the “Elections 2016” talk show of “Rustavi 2” TV, which features discussion on specific subjects.

- In spite of these positive examples, however, in-depth, issue-based discussions of election programs on Georgian TV were generally rare. Many TV anchors allowed politicians to present their visions as a monologue. Instead of asking questions and inquiring about consistency of their visions, and plausibility of their promises, TV anchors often allowed their respondents to use the medium in their favor. Allocating equal time to talk show guests, and requesting all participants to answer same questions does not necessarily mean that election issues are covered efficiently. Invited guest were frequently short of time when discussing important and interesting issues.
- In many cases TV anchors asked very general questions for example, who is your competitor? What will be your maximum result in this election? How many seats you plan to get?) that would allow the respondents to portray their activities only in positive manner.
- Lack of critical questions, unprepared TV anchors, and, as a result, superficial discussions remained challenging.
- Frequently, it was not quite obvious what criteria was used when inviting political subjects from single mandate election districts. For example, TV talk-show “Barieri” hosted majoritarian candidates from the following districts – Gldani 20 election district (22 September), Nadzaladevi 19 election district (20 September), Isani 9 election district (14 September) and Isani 10 election district. However, the criteria for selecting these districts remained unclear.
- Many talk shows of the national TV broadcasters devoted substantial time to majoritarian candidates discussing problems of their election districts. These district-level issues might not have been particularly interesting for the majority of country’s population, especially when the candidates were disclosing their personal opinions and not the visions of their political groups.
- Many anchors and majoritarian candidates mixed responsibilities and competencies of local authorities and majoritarian MPs, which confuses the electorate.
- In contrast to the previous rounds of monitoring, the anchors were keen to inform the audience if invited guests refused to attend.
- Talk shows on “Maestro”, “Imedi”, and “GDS” often deliberated on “anticipated destabilisation” by the “United National Movement” even though it was not always supported by any specific evidence.
- The monitoring revealed that “Ghamis Studia” talk show of “Obieqtivi” TV remains a political platform of the election bloc “Patriotic Alliance, United Opposition”, where the representatives of this group not only have unrestricted opportunity to advertise themselves, but also enjoy open support of anchors. In comparison to the previous round of monitoring, September was characterised by excessive anti-Turkish sentiments.

Pro-Russian messages have decreased as Mr Valeri Kvaratskhelia, the leader of the “Socialist Party” and the TV anchor, identified during the previous monitoring cycle as the source of pro-Russian sentiments, left the channel.

- In September there was one case when the anchors could not manage guest debates, which soon grew into a scuffle.

1st Channel of the Georgian Public Broadcasting (GPB)

During the monitoring period, the monitors focused on the following programs of the “1st Channel”: “Mtavari” (“The Main”) (aired on Mondays and Wednesdays – at 21:30), “Interview” (aired on Tuesdays and Thursdays – at 21:30) and “Realuri Sivrtse” (“Real Space”) (aired on Friday at 21:30).

Compared to the previous monitoring period, the elections have become topical issue, the number of programs has changed and electoral subjects have been discussing their visions more actively.

Talk-show “Mtavari” /“The Main”/

According to the format of the talk-show “Mtavari”, a panel of guests invited to participate in an episode represent a single political party. From a short video collage at the beginning of the show, viewers learn about the history of the given political party. The main segment of the show serves the purpose of introducing the program of the political party to viewers. The host of the talk show asks questions to encourage the politicians, who are invited to participate in the talk show, to speak about the priorities of their program. The host of the talk show does not set the agenda of the talk show, or ask challenging questions, the programs of the political parties are not analysed and each political party is given the opportunity to present themselves in a manner convenient for them.

For example: The guests invited to participate in the Talk Show “Mtavari” aired on September 7, were the representatives of the political party “Free Democrats” who were to present their program. Though, the host of the talk show declared in one of his first remarks that she had not read their program.

“I have to admit that, unfortunately, I have not read the program, your program, but I have seen the advertisements in which you air your promises – that is: you plan to increase pensions, increase the budget by 4 billion GELs, and to define a new statutory minimum wage of 500 GELs. Mr Irakli Alasania mentioned investors and domestic and foreign investment plans as well. The topic of pensions is, to put it simply, quite a serious topic; so, what I am interested in is how you plan to implement your plan regarding pensions; is it based on realistic calculations? Because I have heard lately that it is a sheer populism”, - the host said addressing a member of the political party – Mr David Onoprishvili.

The questions asked by the host of the talk show were limited to: how the political parties saw the future of the spheres such as education or healthcare, how they planned to solve the economic problems existing in the country and whether they had real grounds for making the promises they had declared. Neither the questions asked by the host nor the program did go any further. In fact it remained unclear for voters how feasible and practicable the promises made by political parties were.

There were cases when the question asked by the host contained neither grounded nor substantiated personal opinion on the subject. For example: on September 7, the host asked the following question:

“Investigation i.e. the Prosecutor's Office does not work properly, does it? What should be done to make the Prosecutor's Office look like a prosecutor's office, to make the Prosecutor's Office to investigate cases, instead of following some orders? What exactly should be done?” The question implies the opinion of the host regarding the Prosecutor's Office, in particular that the Office fails to perform the duties and functions entrusted to it, though the journalist did not mention an evidence or specific example to substantiate her statement, and thus it remained unclear what her assertion was based on.

There were certain circumstances when the host could have asked the respondent a question or could have even asked him/her to comment on what he/she had already done, but the host did not do so.

Aluda Goglichidze, who was a deputy minister of education during 8 months, in the period when Tamar Sanikidze was the minister of Education, spoke about education program on September 7. Tamar Chikovani – the host of the talk show - did not use the opportunity to ask him about his experience as a deputy minister, about his initiatives, his achievements and what he failed to manage or get done. The host could have obtained the information about the performance of the Ministry for the period when Aluda Goglichidze was a deputy minister before meeting with her guest and could have formulated her questions based on this information.

In the talk show “Mtavari” aired on September 21 David Bakradze was discussing the necessity of managing and reducing financial stress facing businesses; the host did not remind him of the accusations aired by a group of businessmen against the United National Movement government related to the alleged pressure exercised by the government on their businesses. It is known that as a result of investigative activities the property illegally seized during the period of the United National Movement-led government was returned to some businessmen. The host could have invoked the issues to remind the respondent of the past mistakes and to engage him in discussing the ways to correct these mistakes.

Besides, there were cases in which the guests invited to participate in the program displayed anti-Western sentiments as well as their hostile sentiments towards Turkey. The guests in the talk show “Mtavari” aired on September 19 were the representatives of the election bloc

“Topadze-Entrepreneurs for Our Homeland”, who were allowed by the host to disseminate false or misleading information as well as anti-Western sentiments. For example, Gogi Topadze stated that foreign experts’ intention is to lead Georgia to stalemate and cause it to fall apart instigating reluctance among Georgians to care about industrial development of the country. The host did not even interrupt to ask him to substantiate his statement and say who or what he meant in his statement.

The host did not either interrupt Zviad Chitishvili when he made a negative statement about Turkey. In particular, Zviad Chitishvili said: “The Turks import bad products and instead take our good products”.

Talk-show „Inter-View“

The format of the talk-show in the pre-election period implies interviews with the leaders of political parties. During the monitoring period the talk show was broadcast five times, accordingly, viewers were given the opportunity to view the interviews with five political party leaders: Elene Khoshtaria (the “United National Movement”), Tamar Chugoshvili (“Georgian Dream”), David Usupashvili (“Republican Party”), Nino Burjanadze (“Nino Burjanadze - Democratic Movement”), and Irma Inashvili (“Alliance of Patriots of Georgia”). During the monitoring period, the talk show scheduled to be broadcast on September 22 was not aired; instead the airtime was dedicated to the election program of the political party “Free Democrats” broadcast live.

The format of the program is “hard talk”, which implies face to face comprehensive interviews on sensitive topics and which requires in-depth knowledge of the respondent’s viewpoints, their activities, analysis of archival material, specific documents, preparing hard-hitting questions: both open-ended and closed-ended and using the techniques of asking these questions in an appropriate manner, etc. It should be mentioned herein that Salome Asatiani possesses all the skills mentioned above which is evidenced by the questions prepared by her, the archival material referred by her and her manner of leading discussions with her respondents. The documents referred and quoted by the journalist are always appropriate and accurate; the questions asked to the respondents by the journalist are always specific and hard-hitting; she never tends to ignore any false or inaccurate information or a demagoguery aired by her respondents, giving viewers the opportunity to learn a lot about a particular respondent, their activities, their views on topical issues. All these are crucial in the pre-election period for citizens to make informed decisions.

A single shortcoming during the monitoring period was during the talk-show aired on September 13 broadcasting the interview with Davit Usupashvili, when the respondent was deprived of the opportunity to thoroughly express his opinion in response to the question asked by the host regarding the issue of illegal and unauthorized practice of phone tapping in Georgia, due to the fact that the host had to end the talk show.

Talk-show “Realuri Sivrtse” /“Real Space”/

The format of the talk-show implied questions asked by the voters - citizens from different regions - that were to be answered by majoritarian candidates representing different political parties. In order to eliminate uncertainty about likely bias on the part of the host, the decision regarding which party would have to answer the questions asked from a particular region was made by casting lots.

The journalist does not have to play the role of an arbiter – she does not have to follow or to call on the respondents to follow some specific rules; she does not ask questions and does not have to choose a respondent from the guests. Each respondent is given one and a half minutes to answer questions and the time-lapse mode automatically mutes the microphone as soon as the time is over.

All the political parties are given equal opportunity to express their opinion on the problems aired by voters and the issues that are a major concern for the communities. The questions asked by the citizens are very interesting, topical and critical.

It should also be noted that in many cases the time frame given to candidates do not allow them to thoroughly discuss some of the topical and highly interesting issues. The format of the talk show does not allow for discussions and counterarguments. Therefore viewers find it difficult to decide which of the positions are more acceptable for them. The format of the talk show is intended for competent viewers who can decide and assess the feasibility of the promises that abound from candidates. It would be difficult for voters to make informed decisions without assessing feasibility of the promises aired by the candidates, which, in fact is the main goal of the program so frequently reiterated by the host of the talk show.

For example, one of the candidates says that the Enguri River bed should be changed (2.09). Viewers find it difficult to decide whether it is a good initiative or not.

In the talk-show aired on September 9, all the candidates agree on the need to exempt Chiatura miners from the obligation to pay income taxes, but nobody knows how it should be done, at the expense of what and what will be the amount concerned, and the host does not ask questions related to these details as the format of the talk show does not allow for this.

The talk show is aired throughout the whole country, while only the residents of a single district are to vote for the candidates who are invited to participate in the talk show. The leaders of the political parties do not participate in the show, which makes the discussion process less exciting.

Occasionally, majoritarian candidates have to answer the questions related to the competences of local self-governments. For example, in the talk show aired on September 9, the candidates had to answer the questions related to the following issues:

- Absence of road communications in the villages of Kinchkha and Rondi in Khoni region;
- Absence of a House of Culture in the village of Plavi and Plavismani, where the events are organized in the streets and yards.

- Lack of water supplies in Chiatura;
- Absence of a library in the village of Kumuri (Vani region);
- Absence of nursery school in Tserovani.

All these problems can only be indirectly associated with the activities of majoritarian deputies by asking them whether they will support decentralization and strengthening of local self-governments. Though, the host made neither explicit nor implicit reference to the abovementioned.

“Rustavi 2” Broadcasting Company

“Archevani 2016” (“Choice 2016”), aired twice a week by “Rustavi 2” Broadcasting Company was subject to monitoring during the monitoring period, together with the part of the program “Saturday Courier”, in which the host discussed topics related to elections together with his guests.

“Archevani 2016” (“Choice 2016”)

The talk show consists of three segments: in the first segment of the talk show the political party invited to participate in the show is given an opportunity to give a short presentation. The political party participating in the show is given enough time to inform viewers about the stance, views and outlook of the political party. The single question asked by the host is why the voters should vote for them. The host does not participate in any discussion of the program presented by the political party in this segment.

In the second segment of the show, journalists ask questions to the representatives of the political party but the promises made by the political party are not assessed and journalists do not intend to demonstrate how feasible and realistic vision of this or that political party is. Instead, the questions they ask refer to the political parties themselves, which is important from the viewpoint that in the pre-election period political parties should comment on their positions, statements made and activities performed in the past. Though, during the monitoring period, the focus in this segment, in the process of discussions with leaders of different political parties, was on the possibilities for the different parties to cooperate with Bidzina Ivanishvili and “Georgian Dream”.

Discussions around the issues and problems concerning the regions of Georgia were very interesting and useful in the pre-election period. A video focusing on the problem was shown and then the host asked the representatives of five or six political parties some questions related to the problem highlighted in the video.

There was a case when the guests were asked a question chiefly related to the competence of a local self-government. For example, in the talk show aired on September 12, in which problems facing Imereti region constituted the topic of the discussion, after showing a video highlighting a particular problem, the host made the following comment:

“It is hard to disagree that it will prove anything but easy to persuade these people [the community] that they are not entitled to receive social welfare, because their living conditions are so poor; especially, if they used to depend on the social welfare that was later denied or suspended. The question is why? And this is the question they ask you. Let us start with the “Labour Party”. Are these people entitled to social welfare, or not?”

The question was addressed to majoritarian candidates, who should not be the addressees of the question, as they were not the ones who made the decision. It could have been better if the host had generalized the issue and, for example, have asked the candidates whether they would support an increase in welfare payments in the parliament.

Another question was formulated as follows:

“It's a shame we are obliged to discuss these kinds of problems in the 21st century – the problems such as: sewerage and water supply. How do you plan to solve this problem?”

The journalist should have been aware of the fact that a local municipality is entirely responsible to solve the issues associated with sewerage and water supply. This issue should have been used as a basis for invoking the issue of decentralization or leaving local budgets with more revenues, though these issues were not raised in the show.

The third segment of the show is different – the leaders of different political parties discuss a particular issue or topic, for example, Human Rights and judicial system, health care etc. The guests invited to participate in this segment of the talk show were competent experts, so their answers were interesting. All of the invited experts talked about the needs for a particular reform and almost all of them managed to cover the topic in the time frame allocated for their answers. Viewers were provided with extensive information about the challenges in the field discussed and they had an opportunity to compare the positions of different political parties as well as their opinions about the means and instruments required for solving the problems.

The discussions concerning problems in the regions of Georgia, with the participation of regional reporters reporting live, were interesting. Regional reporters were well aware of the local needs, observing activities of local self-governments on a daily basis, therefore their participation in the discussions concerning the problems of the regions makes the discussions heated up and more interesting. Viewers receive more information from their participation, than they would otherwise.

The program “Saturday Courier”

The program “Saturday Courier” is aired every Saturday. The first segment of the program is a news release and related coverage and the second segment is dedicated to discussions with invited guests. During the monitoring period, the guests invited to participate in the discussions were representatives of the following political parties: “the United National Movement”, “the Georgian Dream”, “the Free Democrats” “State for the People”, and the “Labour Party”.

The journalist hosting the guests was generally well prepared: reminding them of their promises made earlier, quoting the statements made by them in the past. The program was active and dynamic. The respondents' attempts to slander or discredit other candidates or to switch to other issues were immediately interrupted by the host urging them to get back to the issue under discussion; he did not allow the respondents to leave any questions unanswered, but there were a few exceptions.

In the talk show aired on September 17, where the issues of illegal and unauthorized practice of phone tapping and crime were discussed, the host asked very few questions to specify the information aired by the politicians being interviewed. He asked each guest two questions: about the responsibility for illegal and unauthorized practice of phone tapping and about the increase in the crime rate. Neither did he ask the respondents to substantiate the statements made by them when they were almost accusing their opponents of high crimes. For example, Nika Melia ("The United National Movement") talking about Kakhi Kaladze ("The Georgian Dream") said the following:

„Especially before the elections and, namely, Kakhi Kaladze, has closer relations with the criminal world and has engaged criminals in the backstage processes."

“Before the elections Kakhi Kaladze invited some criminal authorities to Georgia, and they arrived in Georgia several months ago... and we all know who arrived in Georgia and how they arrived and in the future we are going to learn even more... and he was authorized to manage street life by Mghebrishvili and Ivanishvili and he took control over the street life. But he loosened the reins and we witnessed slaughter on the street, we all witnessed what happened in Vake, didn't we? Kakhi Kaladze is personally responsible for all these”.

The host did not ask Nika Melia whether he could substantiate the claims he had made, what were his grounds for making these statements, whether there was any proof or evidence or which of the criminal authorities he meant. Furthermore, the host allowed Nika Melia to speak for 6 minutes and 41 seconds without being interrupted.

It should be noted that during the show the host declared that “Georgian Dream” refused to participate in the show.

In the talk show aired on September 10, the host - Giorgi Gabunia asked Mr Irakli Kipiani – a representative of the political party “State for the People“, who was participating in the show as a guest, about the statement made by Mr Vakhtang Megrelishvili – a member of “Girchi” - a political party within the coalition, according to which forming coalition with the “Georgian Dream” was being considered. The respondent said and explained that he meant cooperation on thematic issues and that the statement had been taken out of context. After that the host read an exact quote from Mr Megrelishvili's statement. Although the respondent gave the same answer, the host repeated his question concerning the possibility of forming a coalition with “Georgian Dream”, several times. At the end, the respondent replied: “You should have

invited Mr Vakhtang Megrelishvili to participate in your show and should have given him the opportunity to explain what he meant by saying this”.

The respondent stayed at the studio for 15 minutes and 30 seconds and the host made him speak about Mr Vakhtang Megrelishvili’s position for 6 minutes and 30 seconds. If Mr Vakhtang Megrelishvili’s statement was so important, it would have been better to invite him to participate in the show rather than to waste so much time on clarifying what Mr Vakhtang Megrelishvili’s statement implied with other member of the political party. Despite Mr Irakli Kipiani denying the possibility of cooperation with “Georgian Dream”, the host asked the representatives of other political parties the following question:

“Do you consider cooperation with other political parties in the parliament? Do you consider cooperation with “Georgian Dream”, like “Girchi” does?”

There were moments when the host was particularly cynical, especially when he talked about Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili:

“After putting so many curses on “Republicans”, at the end, Mr Bidzina Ivanishvili blessed the Republicans. But he did it his own way. And this time he quoted not Ilia Chavchavadze, but a Soviet film "Kidnapping, Caucasian Style". To tell you the truth, I personally failed to understand anything in this blessing. May be that is because even the name of the film irritates me and it goes without saying that I have never seen the film, may be you will make a better guess about what Mr Bidzina Ivanishvili meant.“

“Frankly speaking I do not even want to imagine what Bidzina Ivanishvili will do to David Narmania in case he targets him. He will have plenty of reasons”.

Broadcasting Company “Imedi“

The talk shows functioning during the previous monitoring period – “Politics” and “Chronicle Studio” were closed and instead a new talk show “Ghia Eteri” /“Open Air“/ was launched, aired twice a week - on Wednesdays and Fridays and subject to monitoring in the given monitoring period.

Talk Show “Ghia Eteri” /“Open Air“/

The guests participating in the talk show were the representatives of: “Georgian Dream”, the “United National Movement” “Free democrats”, “Republican party”, “Paata Burchuladze - State for the People” “Alliance of Patriots – United Opposition”, and “Nino Burjanadze - Democratic Movement”.

Three shows were dedicated to the debates between the majoritarian candidates of particular constituencies (Mtatsminda, Isani, Gori). Though it should be noted that the journalist was unprepared, the questions asked by the host were largely of general nature, they did not serve

the purpose of raising awareness of a particular candidate or of their program, no thematic debates on specific issues took place in the talk show. Therefore, viewers failed to learn about the views of the majoritarian candidates invited to participate in the show on problematic and topical issues, failed to learn about their programs or understand how realistic and feasible these programs were.

The fact that all candidates are asked the same questions and are given equal time to answer these questions does not necessarily speak of a high quality of election coverage, since it does not serve the purpose of making viewers better informed and basically again and again serve the purpose of voicing and replicating candidates' message, including their unrealistic promises without interruption.

There were attempts on the part of the host to organize thematic debated (on topics such as: judicial reforms, the threat of destabilization, the case of May 26), though the journalist did not show any particular knowledge of the issues concerned as demonstrated by the questions asked by the journalist that were of general nature.

For example, one of the talk shows was dedicated to the debate between two political parties and the topic of the debate was the threat of destabilization (16.09), grounded on an oral statements made by representatives of the "Georgian Dream" and the government officials, which implied that such a threat could come from the "United National Movement". The authors of the statement failed to substantiate their statement by specific facts; some of them claimed that the statement was of preventive character, though later comments on the anticipated threats were made by the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Prime Minister, who failed to clarify the reasons behind these statements.

The debates served the purpose of clarifying whether the United National Movement was really planning destabilization. The debate participants were asking questions to each other, which was never answered and were followed by recriminations instead, concerning the issues related to investigations in the cases of illegal and unauthorized practice of phone tapping, the incident in Kortskheli, etc. The journalist had asked very few questions, he was simply asking the respondents to respond to each other's accusations. As a result viewers remained unaware of: the evidence the authorities' statements about possible destabilization caused by the "United National Movement" were based on; whether these statements were realistic and if yes, to what extent; whether it was a simple pre-election tactics used by the "Georgian Dream"; and, consequently, the logical question is – who would have benefited from a TV program dedicated to this topic and debates on the issues related to the above mentioned statements? And were all these arrangements serving the authorities' interests only?

In some cases during the talk show (5.09, 23.09) the debates became unmanageable, as the guests were all talking at once, and the journalist was unable to control the situation, which ultimately had a negative effect on viewers, who could not get information about specific issues.

In some editions of the talk show, the host conducted interviews with the leaders of some political parties (Kakha Kaladze, Nino Burjanadze, Paata Burchuladze), though during these interviews the journalist allowed the respondents to disseminate the information favoured by them without interruption, or even to make demagogic statements, fuelled partially by the reluctance demonstrated on the part of the interviewer to ask for further clarification of the statements made by respondents, or to attempt revealing the truth by making references to particular documents or facts, etc.

For example, Mr. Kakhi Kaladze was asked the following questions:

- In case of winning these elections will you return to the sphere you have been in charge of - the Ministry of Energy of Georgia?
- What does your team plan to accomplish?
- What does the “Georgian Dream” promise the citizens of Georgia?

After having read the statements made by Irakli Okruashvili, Nika Melia and the wife of Giorgi Peikrishvili – a person currently under arrest, in which the authors were accusing Kakhi Kaladze of some wrongdoings, the host asked the following question: “Let us now follow the logical sequence, what unites these people - Kakhi Kaladze or the National Movement?”

The host failed to be an adequate opponent to the respondents participating in the talk show.

Broadcasting Company “GDS”

The programs of the broadcasting company “GDS” subject to monitoring were “2030“, particularly the part of the program in which different topics were discussed together with guests in the talk show format, and the program “59 seconds”, aired every Sunday at 21:00.

Program „2030“

Like during the previous monitoring period, at the end of the news program “2030“ some issues were discussed together with the guests invited to participate in the discussions. The guests were intended to represent different political parties, though, throughout September, in all 10 members of the “Georgian Dream” participated in the discussions, whereas only 3 representatives of other political parties had been invited to participate in the program. It should be noted that, unlike during the previous monitoring period, the host routinely informed viewers about the guest who refused to participate in the program and declared several times that the National Movement boycotted the TV channel.

A predominant topic of the discussions led by the host with the members of different political parties was this or that statement made by Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili; in some cases the discussions were centered around the issues such as a secretly taped phone conversation between Rustavi 2 TV Company Director General Nika Gvaramia and Paata Burchuladze, leader of the party “State for the People”; the focus was not on the fact of illegal and unauthorized practice of

phone tapping but on “how a private television director dares to give a political leader an ultimatum.”

The host avoided face-to-face interviews with the guests; the only case when the representatives of different political parties sat together in the studio was on September 21, though the topic of discussion was the fact of the Prosecutor’s Office publishing the video material showing violent suppression of a peaceful protest in Tbilisi on May 26, 2011, and evaluation of the election atmosphere, rather than election programs.

It should be noted that the host tended not to be critical towards the guests and to ask them challenging questions; the guests were given the opportunity to express their opinions. For example, on September 20, while discussing the developments on May 26, 2011, with a member of the “Georgian Dream” – Ms. Eka Beselia, Ms. Eka Beselia declared that 81 persons had officially been charged with crimes, “more than 200 episodes have been qualified by the court as containing heavy accusations”. The host does not ask the respondent to clarify whether the 81 people have been charged with crimes committed during the developments on May 26, 2011, who were the people accused, moreover, the host does not ask the respondent a question about the two persons who were found dead after the suppression of a peaceful protest – the case that became the subject of political speculation. In 2011 representatives of opposition parties tried to prove that the cause of the death of the two persons was not a contact with high-voltage electricity transmission lines as the authorities claimed. This episode is a significant detail in the case of May 26, though it has not been investigated to date.

The host of the talk show “2030” displayed different attitude towards the “Republican Party” majoritarian candidate Tamar Kordzaia (16.09) and the “National Forum” leader Gubaz Sanikidze (19.09); the host literally did not allow the guests to express their opinion, asked them a lot of additional questions. The host made them comment on the statements made by Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili. In fact, Tamar Kordzaia was made to analyze statements made by others. For example, when the host asked her to comment on the statement made by her fellow party member – Tina Khidasheli in relation to her view of the election atmosphere, the respondent replied: “If you are interested in my view of the election atmosphere, I can tell you what I think about it; As for the statement made by Ms. Tina Khidasheli, you should ask her to clarify it... I thought you were interested in my view of the election atmosphere”.

The host discussed the issue of alleged destabilization supposedly being planned by the “National Movement” with different respondents at different times; despite the fact that too much time was spent on discussing the issue, the purpose of the discussions remained unclear.

For example, on September 12, Manana Kobakhidze declared that their allegations concerning the threat of destabilization are grounded and to substantiate her statement she recalled the case of murder that was committed in Vake; according to her, “suspect” is the leader of the youth wing of the “United National Movement” – a person who “Mikheil Saakashvili trusted too much”. The host did not ask her to clarify further the statement made by her and the question as to how the murder could have been associated with the alleged destabilization

remained unanswered; but this was quite a frequent topic used by the host in formulating her questions addressed to other guests of the talk show.

For example, on September 8, the question addressed to Kakhi Kaladze was as follows:

"criminal cases have become more frequent in recent days, I mean two cases of murder, one involving wounding of the victim. Some believe that this is the result of the increased rate of crime in the country, the rest claim that the incidents are controlled by certain forces, do you think that particular political force can stand behind these incidents?"

On September 6, the question addressed to Gia Volski was as follows:

"Two cases of murder were recorded during the last week. You must be informed about them; politicians, journalists... in private conversations talk much about planned destabilization I mean that some forces might be interested in destabilizing the situation. A particular political force is thought to stand behind the processes; they say that the process is subject to control; what you can tell us about this?"

The host allowed some of her respondents to disseminate unconfirmed information. For example, Gogi Topadze said "NATO rejected our application, in fact it's eight years now it has been rejecting us"; the host did not correct his statement saying that Georgia has never been denied access to NATO.

On 19 September Ms. Lali Maroshkina declared, that she insisted on her question to be answered by Ms. Sandra Rulovsi, particularly: "Why were the relatives of the deceased sent the dead bodies that had the scars indicating of them having been cut?" "We have the information that an enormous number of operations involving removal of the uterus have been performed at the women's prison, the operations were not planned. They talk about it openly" – she said.

The host did not ask her how Ms. Sandra Rulovsi might have been associated with the women's prison, "You mean that there is evidence proving it, is that what you mean?" – This question was not answered by the respondents and several seconds later the host ended her conversation with the respondent. The heavy accusations remained unsubstantiated.

On September 15, during discussions with Irma Inashvili, instead of quoting Irma Inashvili's statements containing anti-Western messages, the host read an excerpt from an IRI report and asked her the following question: "Which statements or attitudes do they speak about and which statements can be considered as anti-European or anti-Western?"

The questions asked by the host in majority of cases were of general character, for example: "Who is your rival?", "What are your chances in these elections?", "How many people do you plan to have in the Parliament?" etc.

Talk Show "59 Seconds"

Majoritarian candidates from different regions of Georgia participated in the talk show during the monitoring period. The format of the show is strictly structured: the guests have only 59 seconds to answer the questions asked by the host.

The topics of the talk show were relevant to the pre-election period as well as the choice of guests invited to participate in the talk show. Though it should be mentioned herein that the “United National Movement” did not participate in the talk show because of the boycott declared by it to the broadcasting channel. In addition, there were cases when members of political parties refused to participate or could not participate in the talk show due to some reasons; viewers were informed about these cases by the host.

There were cases when the guests of the talk show were the person sharing the same views. For example, on September 4 Kakha Kukava and Besik Danelia were the guests invited to participate in a debate. Both of them declared that they did not have different ideas and they would not participate in the debate.

In all, the program provides an opportunity for the voters to learn about majoritarian candidates’ general views about the concerns and problems they face. Though, the format of the talk show does not provide opportunities for in-depth analysis of these problems. The role of the host in this talk show is basically that of a moderator. His function is confined to asking the questions prepared beforehand and getting answers to these questions from the respondents in 59 seconds. The questions asked by the host are of general nature and serve the purpose of giving the respondents the opportunity to express their views about the issues contained in the questions. The host hardly ever asks additional questions to the respondents or tries to make them clarify details.

For example, on September 11 Tina Khidasheli did not reply to the question asked by the host concerning the Labor Rights; instead, she replied to her opponent Ilia Kokaia and accused him of stealing Gel 157 million. The host did not ask Ms. Tina Khidasheli to explain whether she had any documents proving the allegation.

On September 18, one of the guests – Giorgi Mchedlidze – a member of the political party the “Alliance of Patriots” said, that all the measures should be used to ensure security in the region; the host did not ask him to clarify which particular measures he thought would be appropriate. During a minute the respondent kept arguing that it was necessary to take some measures.

Mr. Mchedlidze did not answer the question about his plans to solve the problems associated with provision of water. His reply contained acknowledgment of the problem, as he said: “There are more problems than water”. The host did not ask him to answer the question.

It would be difficult for voters to make informed decisions without clarifications mentioned above, and based only on the respondents’ answers to the questions prepared by the host beforehand.

Broadcasting Company “Maestro“

The monitors observed the talk shows “Maestro Factor” and “Night Contact”. Compared to the previous monitoring period the frequency of the programs per week as well as the formats of the talk shows has changed in September. “Night Contact” was aired three times per week and “Maestro Factor” was aired once a week on Fridays.

Talk Show “Ghamis Kontakti” /“Night Contact“/

Members of various political parties visited the show during the monitoring period and diverse opinions were expressed. The guests were given an opportunity to freely express their opinions. The talk show consists of several segments and, as a rule, the topics to be discussed with the guests invited to participate in different segment of the talk show differ from one another. The topics of the discussions quite often went beyond the intended subject matter of the talk show which was to be discussed by the guests invited to participate in the talk show and remained as a text ticker at the bottom of the screen. The majority of the questions asked by the host is of general character and is not intended for facilitating in-depth discussions.

During the monitoring period three segments of the talk show were dedicated to majoritarian candidates, though it remained unclear what were the criteria of selecting the constituencies such as Gldani (6.09), Poti (5.09), and Zestafoni (20.09), as well as the criteria of selecting the political parties the majoritarian candidates of which had been invited to participate in the discussions.

The subject matter of discussions conducted with the majoritarian candidates was not quite focused and only common problems were discussed. In fact, the program provided a free platform for politicians, from where they could present their views. "What would you tell the voters?", "What do you have to declare?", "What would you tell your opponent?" - Such questions were the most frequent during the monitoring period.

The very first issue the host was interested in while conducting discussions with Poti majoritarian candidates was why Lela Ebralidze had been nominated as majoritarian candidate by the “Republican Party”. In response to the question asked by the host the respondent replied “You should ask the “Republican Party”.

It should be noted, that during nearly the whole month, the issue of alleged destabilization disseminated by the “Georgian Dream” either was the main topic of the talk show, or referred to by the host in his questions addressed to the respondents. Though it remained unclear what kind of provocations were meant or intended to be carried out, therefore, considering the lack of facts and evidence, it was not necessary to devote so much time to discussions of the above mentioned allegation.

During the talk show aired on September 5, discussing the anticipated provocations with a member of the “United National Movement” – Tinatin Bokuchava, the host asked the respondent the following question:

„According to the ruling political party, the reaction of the “United National Movement” to the statement made by Ms. Tamar Chugoshvili was inadequate and that a responsible political party would have behaved differently, assuming the political responsibility for the anticipated provocations announced by the ruling political party... What comments will you make concerning this?”... - while addressing the respondents the host frequently asked them to comment on the statements made by other political figures.

During the same episode of the talk show, the guests invited to participate in the discussion went beyond the topic of the program and started discussing the issues such as: unemployment, investment, government programs, increased rate of crime, etc.

During the episode of the talk show aired on September 15, the host started discussing the issue of alleged provocations with Mr. Gia Korkotashvili – a member of the political party “Our Homeland” – who had been invited to participate in the fourth segment of the talk show. The question asked by the host was as follows: “Mr. Gia Korkotashvili, the topical issue today is the anticipated threat of destabilization, provocations; we hear various high-ranking officials routinely making statements concerning this alleged destabilization; the last statement related to the issue was made yesterday by the Prime Minister. What do you think about the threat? Do you perceive the threat and what is your opinion concerning this threat? For example, Does the “Georgian Dream” have a particular plan, say, to sign a relevant memorandum with all the political parties, for the opposition to assume and share responsibility for the anticipated developments? What is your opinion concerning this issue?”

The questions asked by the host were superficial. For example, the question addressed to Mr. Gia Korkotashvili was as follows: “How are you? I mean your political career, what is going on in this sphere?” Mr. Gia Korkotashvili replied that he did not feel comfortable with the word “career”, that it was subject to assessment on the part of the public at large. Later the same respondent was asked: “what are some claims you hear from the voters, Mr. Gia Korkotashvili?”

While discussing the views of different political parties concerning the elections, the host was quite passive, virtually asking no questions and allowing the opponents to respond to the allegations aired against them (for example in the talk show aired on September 6).

The impression gained while monitoring the talk show “Ghamis Kontakti” /“Night Contact“/ was that highlighting certain issues and attaching excessive importance to them served the purpose of portrayed the ruling party positively.

One of the segments of the talk show aired on September 13 was entirely dedicated to Mr. Vazha Tsigroshvili – a person whose rights to the property illegally confiscated during the

previous administration had been reinstated. The person described the case in details and afterwards Mr. Irakli Nadareishvili from the Prosecutor's Office was asked to comment on the case. The question asked to Mr. Irakli Nadareishvili by the host was as follows: "Could you tell us how difficult it was to identify who was to be held responsible and who the victim was in this case?" The main message of the segment of the talk show was to negatively portray the previous government and positively the current one, though no representative of the previous government had been invited to participate in the discussion.

One of the segments of the talk show aired on September 9 was entirely dedicated to the film "Herocratia" directed by Goga Khaindrava. The questions asked by the host were intended to present the film in the positive context and emphasize its importance: "Have you already finished working on the film?", "Was it a problem to persuade the actors to participate in the film?", "Do we have to expect even more violence, so to speak, in the coming episodes?", "How does the plot develop?" At the end of the segment of the talk show the host made the filmmaker Goga Khaindrava to speak about the priority of restoration of justice.

Oto Abesadze – a member of the "Georgian Dream" and an adviser to the Minister of Education had been invited to participate as an expert in the talk show aired on September 14. The text ticker at the bottom of the screen during the talk show was "Anticipated Destabilization" during the first segment of the talk show when the guests were discussing a secretly taped phone conversation between Rustavi 2 TV Company Director General Nika Gvaramia and Paata Burchuladze, leader of the party "State for the People", and again when the election atmosphere was being discussed. The topic of the "anticipated destabilization" was brought up only in the third segment of the talk show during the discussion with the guest - Ms. Manana Kobakhidze – a member of the "Georgian Dream".

Talk Show "Maestro Factor"

"Maestro Factor" has been broadcast in a renewed format since September 9 and was aired three times during the monitoring period. The renewed format of the talk show envisaged the election debates on certain topics. Different candidates participated in different series of debates. The host played the role of an arbiter and tended not to interrupt the discussions, her function was to moderate the discussions.

Unclear, obscure and useless questions and introductory texts of the host remain as drawbacks of the talk show.

On September 9, while airing the talk show in a renewed format for the first time, the introductory text of the host was as follows:

"All the studies conducted show that the unemployment is the number one problem in the country; what the voters are interested in, first of all, is political leaders' plans concerning employment policy. The citizens will participate in the 2016 elections in high hopes of better

economic and social conditions rather than in hopes of better foreign policy or even protection of their values.”

Viewers were left without clear understanding of which studies the host meant, what sources made the host aware of high hopes of the voters participating in the elections; what the basis for the conclusions made by the host was – remained unclear

Despite the host’s announcement that the talk show would be dedicated to debates on the programs, economic views were discussed in the first two segments of the talk show, as for the third segment of the talk show, it was entirely dedicated to a new video clip featuring the “Georgian Dream”. Three representatives of the “Georgian Dream” (so called “new faces”) were routinely assessing the new clip. While introducing them to viewers the host said: “they [the guests] are the most valuable acquisition to Georgian politics”.

The host openly expressed her mind on the video clip as well:

„One of the most important novelties, very interesting for me, was this pre-election video clip – the presentation of which took place not long ago. This video clip was absolutely different, I have to admit that I liked it very much because it is highly positive; that is what makes it so different. Basically, during the election campaign focus is on the problems and on concerns people express, and it all appears on the screen. What is your opinion concerning the idea, Nino, let us start with you; where did you get this idea of making something like this, a happy Georgia, that is what we see on the screen; and how do the voters perceive it, who, in principle, is used to hear problems discussed.” “First tell me whether you liked it and whether it meets the expectations and idea”.

„The video clip also features the aspiration of the Prime Minister for innovations and these modern technologies and the drone flying, I do not know... Do you think everyone for example in regions will guess and understand what this flying object is? I mean the flying object in this video clip; I mean, will they be able to correctly interpret the message?”

The manner of formulating the questions discloses the host’s preference towards a certain political group.

Just like during the previous monitoring period, pro-Russian propaganda messages were aired by the host in September as well.

During the talk show aired on September 16, while discussing the views of political parties on foreign policy issues, the host expressed the following opinions:

- “We cannot gain access to NATO without our territorial integrity having restored, but we want to become a NATO member to restore our territorial integrity”.
- “Do you really think that Georgia has a chance to become a NATO member without Tskhinvali and Abkhazia?”

- “Can we imagine Georgia becoming a NATO member and Russian bases deployed in a territory of a NATO member state?”
- “NATO will eventually make the decision to grant Georgia membership... in our Regions...”

The guests were trying to persuade the host that what she was saying was wrong and could be construed as pro-Russian propaganda messages.

“I am pretty amazed at such a skeptical formulation of your question” – Aleksii Petriashvili (a member of the political party “Free Democrats”) told the host; “It sounds like a pro-Russian propaganda message” – said Salome Samadashvili (a member of the political party the “Untied National Movement”).

In the second segment of the talk show Giorgi Akhvediani (a member of the political party “Democratic Movement”) joined the guests, and managed to elaborate and enhance above mentioned messages.

Broadcasting Company “Pirveli“

Monitors observed the talk show “Rviani” (“The Eight”) aired on weekdays at 20:00.

Talk Show “Rviani”

The talk show adhered to the principle of diversity of opinions; the guests invited to participate in the talk show were representatives of diverse political parties. During the monitoring period the host of the talk show demonstrated impartial attitude and political or other neutrality by the questions asked by the journalist and the accents made by her. Owing to the fact that the monitoring period coincided with pre-election period, the majority of the guests invited to participate in the talk show were parliamentary candidates either sitting in the studio or appearing and speaking via the monitors. It can be said that in majority of cases the balance was maintained in the process of introducing the guests.

Though, an incident during the talk show, aired on September 12, evolved as follows: according to the host the guest who had been invited to participate in the talk show was Ms. Elene Khoshtaria of the “United National Movement”, but the “United National Movement” decided to send Tinatin Bokuchava instead. The talk show production crew refused to have her as a guest, because Tinatin Bokuchava had participated in the previous episode of the talk show. As a result of this incident, while the various political parties presented their views, viewers failed to listen to and learn about the view of the “United National Movement” concerning Human Rights - the topic of the talk show. The Broadcasting Company assumes the responsibility to provide equal opportunities to all the candidates under the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters.

There was a case when it remained unclear how the guests invited to participate in the talk show were associated with the topic of the talk show. In particular, the topic of the first

segment of the talk show aired on September 6 was the agreement concluded between Irakli Okruashvili and Kibar Khalvashi on ownership of “Rustavi 2” Broadcasting Company. The guests invited to discuss the issue were Manana Nachkebia (a member of the “New Rights Party”), Sevdia Ugrekhelidze (a member of the “United National Movement”), Nana Kakabadze (Head of the NGO "Former Political Prisoners For Human Rights"), Nikoloz Mzhavanadze (the chairman of the "Rights Defenders' Union”). The criteria of selecting these people to discuss the topic of the talk show remained unclear.

During the discussion a new film directed by Goga Khaindrava was mentioned, and the comment made by Sevdia Ugrekhelidze contained severe charges against Goga Khaindrava; she said: “unfortunately, no one was around to film him participating in the shootings at the Metekhi Bridge when President Zviad Gamsakhurdia was trying to escape the country, neither was he filmed while looting in Abkhazia, nor drugs...” The host displayed adequate reaction reminding the respondent that allegations without sufficient evidence were unacceptable.

Unlike during the previous monitoring period, in September, the hosts were well prepared for discussing topics selected for the talk show; they had sufficient information about the programs of the political parties participating in the talk show. Improvement can be observed in view of the hosts reading introductory texts, introducing the main topic of the talk show to viewers, which was not always the case during the previous monitoring period.

The problems could be observed during the talk show aired on September 31, when despite some anti-Western statements and ungrounded allegations aired by the respondents, the host did not display adequate reaction.

"In case the ideology is perverse, as it is already the case, and is imposed on us by introducing new subjects at schools that result in moral decay of our children and breaking up of our families, who will need such freedom? Once Russia was better for us than the Muslim world, now it is better than America”, - declared a guest - Guram Palavandishvili (a member of the “Democratic Movement”).

Instead of asking the respondent to give arguments he thought would substantiate his statements concerning adverse effect of the USA on Georgia, and doing so to uncover the weakness of the statements made by the respondent and prove him wrong, the journalist addressed another guest – Iago Khvichia, (a member of the political party “Girchi”) and formulated his question as follows: “What are your counterarguments to the statement we have just heard, to choose a better enemy from the bad and worse enemies, as Mr. Guram Palavandishvili has defined”. The formulation of the question implied branding the USA - a country which has friendly relations with Georgia – enemy. Iago Khvichia stated that he considered it insulting to sit in the studio with Guram Palavandishvili, and if he had known beforehand that he was going to participate in the debates together with Guram Palavandishvili, he would have refused to participate in the talk show; his statement makes it clear that the guest had not been previously informed about other guests, who would have to participate in

the debates. According to the Principles for Ethical Journalism, a guest shall be previously informed about the opponent.

Guram Palavandishvili made multiple xenophobic and homophobic statements, such as: “I do not respect Islam”; “Tatarisation of Georgia”; “Despite the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church took control over the Georgian Church, it was much better than the Mullah” “gayification of Georgia”, “sodomy”, etc. The host of the talk show did not react adequately on the intolerance displayed by the respondent; the single remark he made was intended to call for the respondent to stop using such phrases. What mattered most in this case was that the journalists should have been better prepared for leading the discussions such as that mentioned above, because the myths and narratives used by pro-Russian forces in Georgia are well known and, therefore, reactions of the journalist to the statements should have been more adequate.

"We apologize to our viewers, if they happen to hear any xenophobic and homophobic statement during our show" – the host declared at the end of the talk show, which does not necessarily imply that the host disapproved of such statements, because he did not confirm the fact that the statements made by one of the respondents during the talk show were truly xenophobic and homophobic.

Just like during the previous monitoring period, the problem of the hosts leading the debates prevailed in September. Quite often all the guests start talking simultaneously thus depriving viewers the possibility to hear any of them. The host tries to calm them down, but finds it difficult to be strict and categorical.

During the talk show aired on September 7, an incident took place when, at the end of the show, Giorgi Akhvlediani (a member of the “Democratic Movement”) threw water at Davit Kiziria’s (a member of the political party “State for the People”) face. The host declared that the guests would return after the commercial break, but it appeared to be the end of the talk show episode.

Just like in this episode of the talk show, there were quite frequent cases when the discussions went beyond the announced topic and went on to discuss mutual accusations. This is particularly striking during the debates, as a rule, the participants stop discussing the topic and start accusing one another of some wrongdoings allegedly committed by the participants in the past, or of their activities at present.

Broadcasting Company “Caucasia“

The talk show “Barrier” (aired four times a week at 21:15) was studied during the monitoring period

Talk Show “Barrier”

During the monitoring period 12 talk shows were aired. The talk show never starts or finishes as scheduled (21:15 – 22:30). Sometimes the talk show continues until after 23:00. The talk show has two hosts leading the program in turns.

Diverse opinions could be heard during the talk show episodes and representatives of various political parties had been invited to participate in the talk show; in case a guest could not come to the studio to participate in the discussions, the host would inform viewers of this fact. The hosts were impartial and unbiased but instead of asking some challenging questions to their respondents, the questions asked by them were as follows:

- What are the problems that the local population faces?
- What would you do if you won the elections?
- What are your evaluations of the election atmosphere?
- What promise would you make in the first place?
- Do you represent yourself more than your party or vice versa?
- Do you emphasize your strengths or do you represent your party?

The hosts hardly ever used quotes. They were not well prepared. They did not know the election programs of political parties.

The hosts can neither moderate debates, nor can they ensure equal floor time for guests. For example, on September 8 – due to the Confrontation between the leader of the “Assembly of Abkhazians” – Malkhaz Patariaia and the leader of the political party “Free Georgia” – Kakha Kukava, the rest of the guests were deprived of the possibility to use their floor time. In the end Mr. Kukava left the talk show.

Debates between the majoritarian candidates contesting at the same constituency were conducted several times within the talk show “Barrier”. For example: the majoritarian candidates contesting at the following constituencies: Gldani constituency No. 20 (22.09), Nadzaladevi constituency No. 19 (20.09), Isani constituency No. 9 (14.09) and Isani constituency No. 10.

The fact is that a single talk show cannot provide for organizing debates between candidates of all constituencies even in Tbilisi alone, but, in this case, the criteria for choosing a constituency, from where the candidates are invited to participate in the debates, remains unclear. The hosts did not inform viewers about this.

Broadcasting Company “Tabula”

The talk show studied during the monitoring period was “Theorem” aired on Mondays and Thursdays. It should be noted that the talk show has not been aired since August 1.

Talk Show “Teorema” (Theorem)

The program aims at analyzing events and developments that take place during the election period, though focus is not particularly on election programs. In September, like during the previous monitoring period, the show does not stand out for the diversity of opinions; representatives of only a few political parties took part in the show. “Georgian Dream” did not take part in the show, as the host declared, during the monitoring period.

The host actively participates in the show, though the journalist does not ask the guests to substantiate their statements; he gives them absolute freedom leaving viewers with plenty of questions. For example, on September 8, Salome Samadashvili declares, that the political party she belongs to “sets up new standards for planning, conducting and implementing pre-election campaign in Georgian politics”, and mainly talks about the so called “door-to-door” campaign as an innovation; the “door-to-door” campaign, as the respondent explains, implies visiting voters, informing them about their program and listening to them, but it remained unclear and the host did not ask her to explain why she thought that the program was an innovation, and what was special about that program, as many political parties have the practice of visiting voters and talking to them. It should be noted herein that the next guest – Amiran Giguashvili (a representative of the political party “Free Democrats”) noted, that he himself organizes meetings with the voters: “I do not know when Ms. Samadashvili discovered that this was an innovation, but I want to tell you that this method is exactly as old as election campaign.”

The host does not interrupt his respondents and does not require from them to clarify facts. For example, Ms. Salome Samadashvili talks about students conducting surveys “and the impression they have is that, unfortunately, voters, especially the ones who live in the regions of Georgia, are reluctant to express their views due to the pressure on the part of the government”. Despite these severe charges, the host did not ask the respondent what kind of pressure she meant, against whom and in which particular region.

The same developments took place on September 12, when the City Hall of Tbilisi was accused of spending budget funds in the pre-election period. In spite of the fact that one of the questions of the host was related to the “active pre-election campaign in the City of Tbilisi”; the journalist did not cite any statistics proving that spending of certain items of the budget had really increased.

The topic of the talk show was the development of the City of Tbilisi and political parties were invited to express their views concerning the development of the capital city. At the end of the talk show it was still unclear what were some ways and means chosen by the candidates to solve the problems that the city faces, whether there was any difference between the ways and means chosen by different political parties and why the candidates believed that the way chosen by their political party was the most acceptable.

It should be noted that when the host declares that no representative of “Georgian Dream” is participating in the show; neither does he try to express the position of the party.

Unlike during discussions concerning development of the City of Tbilisi, the host was relatively more prepared during the talk show dedicated to the economic views of political parties aired on September 22. The host seemed to know the programs of the political parties invited to participate in the discussions, and was asking relevant questions.

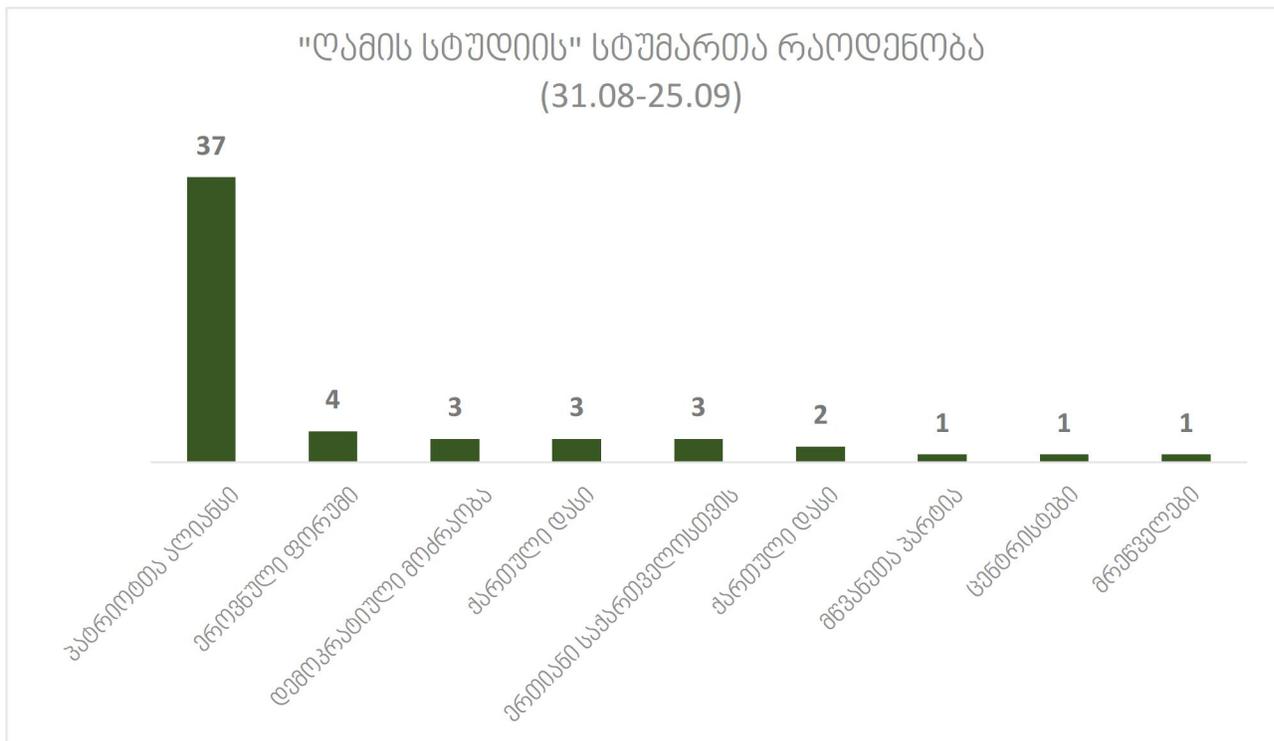
Sandro Tarkhan-Mouravi - a political expert and a member of the political party “Girchi” participated in the talk show aired on September 8; some questions asked by the host required to be answered by an expert and others to be answered by a representative of the political party.

Broadcasting Company “Obiektivi”

Talk Show “Ghamis Studia” /“Night Studio”/

The program “Night Studio” is aired every day at 22:30. The program consists of two segments. Frequently, one and the same issue is discussed in both segments of the program. In general, it is difficult to identify the topic of the program due to the fact that too many topics are discussed during a single segment. “Night Studio” has three hosts leading the program in turns.

The problems identified during the previous monitoring period prevailed in this monitoring period as well. The program in fact is platform of the political party “Alliance of Patriots” from where it leads propaganda campaign, giving the members of the party the freedom to talk about anything they want and for indefinite period of time.



The hosts agree with the guests in virtually everything they say and counterarguments are nowhere to be heard. The hosts not only eschew asking challenging questions, but they also openly speak their minds and instead of discussions there are frequent friendly talks in the studio. It should be noted, that many majoritarian candidates and members of the “Alliance of Patriots” were staff members of this TV company just a few months ago.

On September 8 during a discussion with the guest, the host said:

“I listen to you Zaza ... and I am amazed at the honesty and openness you display. I have listened to some unscrupulous majoritarian candidates who promise the citizens to build roads, to provide them with water etc., and they do so shamelessly, in front of... how do we call those things... in front of TV cameras... I don't know... may God have mercy on us... They'd better be individuals first and achieve something, and when they do... what they deserve is to be ashamed of these moments... these people... I assure you.”

During the talk show episode aired on September 13, the host started his conversation with Gubaz Sanikidze as follows: “I am your fan, I have to admit, I would like to see maximum representation of national forces in the parliament, but, see, I have listened to Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili and I feel a bit frustrated.”

On September 7 the host addressed Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi with the question formulated as follows:

“Mr. Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, You have decided, as we have already mentioned, to lead the “Alliance of Patriots” in Adjara, where you have put so much effort, to ensure the rights of the population of Adjara to be protected, not least in relation to the Azizie Mosque but today they say that there can be someone who will finance the project and the Mosque will be completed, and so on and so forth. The fact is that there are more than 60.000 signatories in Adjara. What problems do you plan to solve in Adjara?”

“High officials do not keep secret the imperialistic intensions of Turkey, vice versa, they air their intentions openly.”

With the remarks the host shared anti-Turkish rhetoric displayed by the respondent and even tended to encourage the sentiments. Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi gave a long speech on how a part of the Georgian territories are occupied by the Turks.

In conclusion it can be summarized that compared to the previous monitoring period, anti-Turkish rhetoric became stronger. Guests invited to participate in the discussions were made to comment on issues related to this rhetoric. In general, the focus on this region was stronger than on any other regions.

On September 23, a coverage featuring a survey conducted in the streets of Batumi on the issue of establishing new Turkish school was aired.

A vox pop question was formulated as follows: Do you approve of opening an educational institution in Batumi, which is not regulated by The Law of Georgia?

The answer to this question is highly likely to be negative; the comments made by the population contain Turk phobic statements, such as: We implore the Turks to come to our country and work here; we ask for being conquered, etc.

After a vox pop the host addresses the guest with the following question: “Is it reasonable to establish a school that cannot be regulated by the Law of Georgia?”

The hosts stand out for their particularly negative disposition towards the ruling period of the “National Movement” as well as towards the members of the “National Movement”; The host associated the murder committed in Tbilisi on September 6 with the “National Movement”.

“Those forces called “Zonder brigades”, young men, who were wearing balaclava masks and who we saw on November 7 and May 26, do you really think, Nana, that they were discharged and are doing nothing now? They can be victims of blackmail now, they may no longer wish to do what they used to do, but here are those 9 years; now it is a good time for blackmailing. And besides, those videos, files, cases of sexual harassment, everything has its price now, and the National Movement, considering their moral, will spare no effort to use everything what can be possibly used. Don’t you have an impression that such a sequence of so many developments in the streets of Tbilisi may more or less be interconnected?”

One of the hosts – Nino Ratishvili displays cynicism toward those on the voter lists, who have been educated abroad in almost every episode of the talk show. For example, these citizens have been referred to as “I studied in London” / a remark reiterated by a comic character of a Georgian sitcom “In the Middle of the City”/, she also quoted Niko Nikoladze several times: “My suitcase as well has been to London” – emphasizing that being educated abroad does not necessarily mean that the person is a professional.

“Public Broadcaster Television of Adjara”

The program “Elections 2016” aired on “Public Broadcaster Television of Adjara” three times a week (on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays) was monitored during the monitoring period. Since the previous monitoring period, the program “Pirispir” (“Face to Face”) was no longer aired on the TV channel, because the host of the program – Tsotne Ananidze was entered into the list of members of the political party “Georgian Dream” and has been engaged in politics since.

Program “Elections 2016”

Since September 12 some changes were made to program schedule of “Public Broadcaster Television of Adjara”. The program “Factor” was replaced by “Elections 2016” aired three times

a week, in which candidates presented their programs. The program adhered to the principle of diversity of parties and the parties were given sufficient time to present their views to viewers.

The program virtually provided a platform for parties, from where they could present their views. The host did not actively participate in the presentations and played the role of an arbiter. Though, it should be mentioned that the host did not allow the guests to insult their opponents.

Identifying participants of the program was a problem, as the guests, in the majority of cases, were introduced by the spokespersons of the political parties, who addressed them by their first names only and there were no text tickers at the bottom of the screen to help identify the guests, that is why sometimes viewers had no understanding of who was speaking from the studio. There were cases when neither the first name of the person speaking in the studio was mentioned (for example, in the program aired on September 16).

The questions asked by the host were of general character – how does the political party plan to solve social, educational, economic, etc. problems. The host did not discuss issues with the representatives of the political parties, and only occasionally addressed them with questions intended to clarify the statements made in the studio by the representatives of the political parties and to give them certain directions.

The format of the program does not allow viewers to be provided by comprehensive, analytical and valuable information, which will enable them to make informed decision. The guests make reference to the data related to infrastructure projects, unemployment reduction plans, and increase in the number of employees in business. The single opponent in the studio is the host, who cannot be competent in all the issues referred to by the guests, provide persuasive counter arguments or show the viewer how real the promises made by the candidates are. It might have been more effective to hold thematic debates, in which different parties would enter into discussions with one another, criticize and disclose some facts about each other.

For example, on September 12, a representative of the political platform - “Paata Burchuladze - State for the People”, whose name was Minuri and whose surname was not mentioned, while speaking about social program, said that the households with scores less than 125 000 would be eligible for welfare benefits. Besides, they planned to finance education of the children in these families. Later a representative of the same party said that all the families with schoolchildren will receive a state subsidy in the amount of Gel 1200. But the host did not ask them the questions such as: where did the political party plan to get the sums, did they have calculated the cost of these programs etc. and therefore, viewers were deprived of the opportunity to learn how realistic the promises made by the representatives of the political party were.

During the program aired on September 14, remarks made by Mr. Merab Surmanidze – a member of the “United Communist Party of Georgia” were that "people in the Soviet Union lived much better" they had an access to quality education and they strived to build a

prosperous country and secure territorial integrity with the assistance provided by the Russians. In addition the respondent claims that it was Mikheil Saakashvili who started the 2008 war. The host did not try to oppose the guest with counterarguments.

Hate speech has been used in the talk show, though the host has displayed no adequate reaction. On September 19, while presenting the election program of the political party “Topadze Industrials – Our Motherland” the spokesperson of the political party made the following remarks on the issue associated with the protection of the rights of sexual minorities:

“As for the sexual minorities, I strongly disapprove of same-sex marriage so called gay marriage. If anyone has different idea I will give floor to them (applause in the studio). It is totally unacceptable for me. I do not want my children to be one of them. I have three sons and God forbid that they marry men. That will definitely drive me mad”.

The host did not react to this remark and went on to discuss another issue.

Article 33 of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters states: “Broadcasters should avoid causing offence to any religious, ethnic or other groups by using, among others, certain terminology and images.” “Any unjustified referral to ethnic origin, religious faith, sexual orientation, family status, social standing or any other factor as to a cause of the problem, or the use of offensive terminology by a source in live broadcast or news programme should not go unchallenged and presenters should ask authors of offensive statements to substantiate their views.”

Broadcasting Channel „TV 25“

The program on TV ”25“ monitored during the monitoring period was the talk show „Dialogue“, aired twice a week.

Talk Show “Dialogue“

The talk show enables voters to get more or less complete information about election subjects and to learn about their promises and potential.

For the first segment of the talk show the journalists prepare some material about the guests who are invited to participate in the talk show. During the segment viewers get acquainted with the biographies of the majoritarian candidates and with the programs of political parties they belong to, provided by the journalists. Viewers are also given the opportunity to listen to candidates talking about the programs.

In the second segment of the talk show the candidates were answering the questions asked by the host and the viewers. The host appeared to be well prepared for every episode of the talk show: was asking logical and challenging questions, was good at managing the situation in the studio and did not allow the guests to insult their opponents. The journalist was presenting facts, quoting, etc. as well as taking on the role of an opponent of the guest.

On September 16 Mr. Merab Surmanidze – a member of the “United Communist Party of Georgia” was a guest invited to participate in the talk show. The topic of the talk show was Human Rights. The guests claimed that unlike the Soviet period, these days, human rights are not ensured. The host opposed the guest with counterarguments, did not allow him to disseminate anti-Western messages and did not approve of the general statements made by the guest.

When the guest was providing answers, after being asked by the host to substantiate his statements, the host allowed him to make some anti-Western remarks.

On September 14, Irakli Jashi – a member of the “Industrialists” party talked about the promotion of small and medium businesses. He made a statement that the government should help businessmen by making long-term loans available for them; the host asked him to explain precisely and in details what he meant. Later, the host asked him to name the most important decision that, in his opinion, could be considered as his - Irakli Jashi’s achievement while being a member of the Supreme Council, and the most important decision he would make in the case of his return to the legislative body. The guest appeared to be unprepared for this kind of question. He tried to recall some of his achievements but he failed to answer additional questions asked by the host, as he had no answers to those questions.

Irakli Jashi: “I think one of my achievements is changes to the Budget Process and an amendment to the Law of Authorities. It was an amendment to the Law as well as to the Supreme Council Regulation”

Irina Kurua: “What does it concern? Would you mind giving more details?”

Irakli Jashi: “It was about... it was a change, well, it was not written, the Law envisaged one thing and the regulation envisaged something different. I do not quite remember what it was exactly about. If you had warned me I would have come more prepared. This was three years ago.”

Irina Kurua: “You should be prepared for the questions like this when you meet your voters.”

One of the interesting parts of the program is a call-in show, when viewers telephone the show while the program is being broadcast and ask questions about the issues that interests them. Sometimes viewers insult representatives of political parties, but in such cases, Irina Kurua interrupts them and asks them to act in a reserved manner and observe the norms of ethics.